CAPTAIN OF THE CREW

RALPH·H·BARBOUR

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CAPTAIN OF THE CREW

BY RALPH HENRY BARBOUR.

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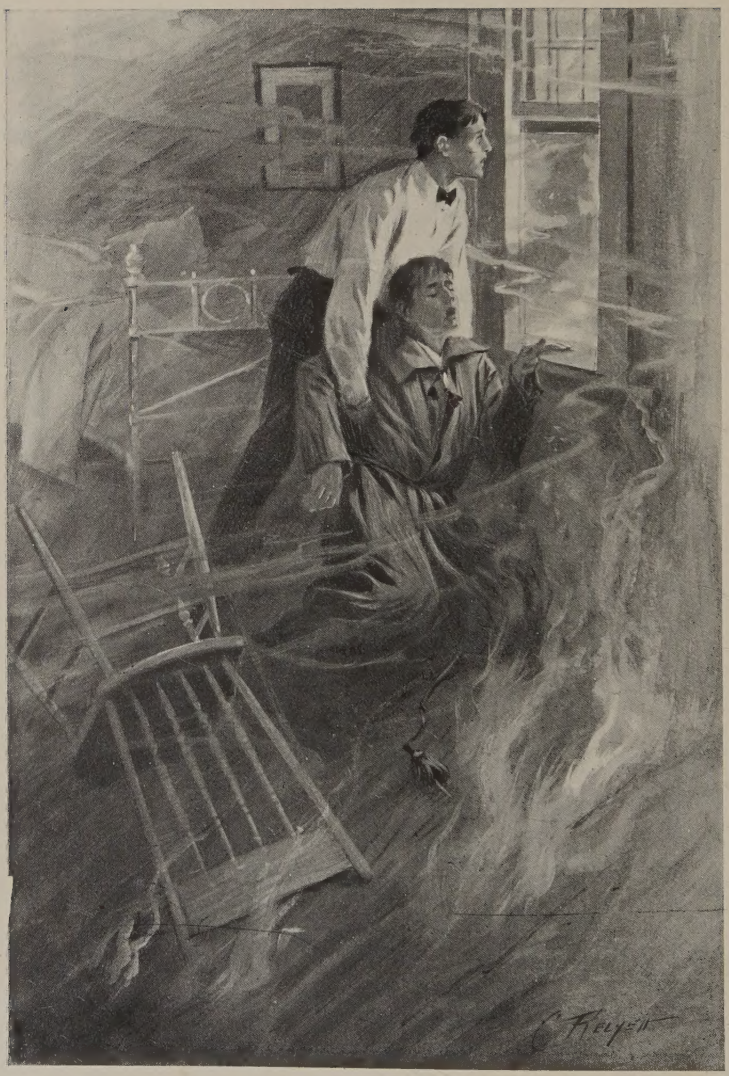

"Your promise!" he cried. "Quick!"

(See page 211.)

CAPTAIN OF THE CREW

By

RALPH HENRY BARBOUR

Author of For the Honor of the School
and The Half-Back

Illustrated by C. M. Relyea

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1908

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INTRODUCTION

In this, as in the two preceding volumes of the series —The Half-Back and For the Honor of the School—an attempt is made to show that athletics rightly indulged in is beneficial to the average boy and is an aid rather than a detriment to study. In it, too, as in the previous books, a plea is made for honesty and simplicity in sports. There is a tendency in this country to-day to give too great an importance to athletics—to take it much too seriously—and it is this tendency that should be guarded against, especially among school and college youths. When athletics ceases to be a pleasure and becomes a pursuit it should no longer have a place in school or college life.

Many inquiries have been received as to whether Hillton Academy really exists. It doesn't. It is, instead, a composite of several schools that the author knows of, and is not unlike any one of a half dozen institutions which are yearly turning out hundreds of honest, manly American boys, stronger, sturdier, and more self-reliant for just such trials and struggles as in the present volume fall to the lot of Dick Hope.

To those readers who have followed the varying fortunes of Joel March, Outfield West, Wayne Gordon, and their companions, this book is gratefully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA, *June 19, 1901.*

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CAPTAIN OF THE CREW

CHAPTER I

THE BOY ON THE BOX

"HILLTON! HILLTON!"

The brakeman winked solemnly at the group of boys in the end seats, withdrew his head, slammed the door and crossed the swaying platforms to make a similar announcement to the occupants of the car ahead. From the left side of the train passengers caught a glimpse of a broad expanse of meadow upon which tiny flecks of red flared dully in the winter sunshine; of a distant grand stand, bleak and desolate, against whose northern shoulder a drift of snow snuggled as though seeking protection from its enemy the sun; of two pairs of goal-posts gravely watching each other from opposite ends of a long field; of a bit of country road, a slowly rising hill, a little army of leafless elms, and, last of all, crowning a promontory below which the frozen Hudson sparkled, a group of old red brick buildings, elbowing each other with friendly rivalry in an endeavor to gain the post of honor and to be first seen of

the outside world that traveled by train. That was Hillton Academy.

There was a long warning shriek from the engine, echoed back by the wooded slope of Mount Adam; a momentary reverberating roar as the train crossed the little viaduct; the whistle of air brakes; and then, as the train came to a stop, a babel of boys' voices. Some twenty youths of assorted ages and sizes, laden with every description of luggage, from golf bags and valises down to boxes of figs and caramels purchased from the train-boy and still uneaten, pushed and scrambled their way to the station platform. The last trunk was slid from the baggage car, and the conductor, portly and jovial, sang "All aboard!" and waved a smiling good-by to the boys.

"Good-by, Pop! See you later!" "Don't forget that anti-fat, Pop!" And then, when the train had gained speed, a slim junior danced along the platform waving a bit of pasteboard exultingly under the conductor's nose and just out of his reach: "Hey, Pop! You didn't get my ticket! Stop the train! Stop the train!" An old joke this, that never failed of applause. The conductor shook his fist in simulated wrath, and the next instant, with a farewell shriek of the whistle, the train was lost to sight.

Beside the platform waited the coach, from the box of which "Old Joe," the driver, smiled a toothless welcome. Each year held three red-letter days for "Old Joe,"

namely, the days preceding the commencement of the three school terms, when the students, refreshed by recess or vacation, returned in merry troops to Hillton—noisy, mischievous, vexing, but ever admirable to the old stage-driver—and taxed the capacity of the coach to the utmost, and "Old Joe's" patience to the limit. This was the first of the red-letter days of the present year, which was as yet but forty-eight hours old, and all day long the boys who had been so fortunate as to return to their homes for the Christmas recess had been piling from the trains to the stage and from the stage to the steps of Academy Building. And "Old Joe," who loved the excitement of it all, and worshiped everything, animate or inanimate, that belonged to Hillton, was in his glory.

"Now, then, you young terrors, get aboard here. Can't wait all afternoon for you. This ain't no 'commodating train, and——"

"Hello, Joe, old chap; how's your appetite?" "Still able to sit up and take your meals, Joe?" "Say, fellows, Old Joe's looking younger every day." "Give me a hand up, Joe, and I'll show you how to drive those old plugs of yours." "Please, Joe, you said I could sit on the box with you this trip, don't you remember?"

"Have to be next time, youngster; seat's full a'ready. How do, Mister Hope? Scramble out o' here, sir, an' give Mister Hope your seat. Oh, is that you, Mister Nesbitt? Well——"

"No, I'll sit back here," answered the boy addressed as Hope. "I can jump off quicker when we upset."

"Hark to that," growled the driver in pretended anger; "an' me forty-two years on this road an' never no accident yet. All aboard there! No, ye don't, sir; no more room atop. Trunks'll go up next trip, sir. All right now. *Tlk! Get ap!*"

The two stout grays, known popularly as "Spring Halt" and "Spavin," settled into their collars, and the big stage, swaying comfortably on its leather springs, lumbered around the corner into Station Road. From the interior of the coach, where twelve youths had managed to pack themselves into a space designed to hold but nine, floated out a wild medley of shouts and laughter. On top, two boys had secured the much-coveted places beside the driver, while on the seat behind three others were perched. When the little stone station had been left the boy who occupied the other end of the driver's seat, and whom "Old Joe" had called "Mister Nesbitt," leaned across the intervening youth and addressed the driver:

"Now, Joe, let's have the lines, old chap, and I'll show you a bit of fancy driving that'll open your eyes. Come, now, like a nice old Joe."

"Now, don't be askin' for the reins, Mister Nesbitt, sir. You know it's agin the rules for the boys to drive."

"What! Oh, rot, Joe! I never heard of such a rule. Did you, Williams?"

"Never," replied the third occupant of the box. "Joe dreamed it."

"Of course you did, Joe. Come on, now; just let me have them to the corner there. Don't be a duffer, man. Why, I can drive a pair bang up." "Old Joe" cast a deeply suspicious glance at the youth—and was lost. Trevor Nesbitt assumed a look of angelic innocence and sweetness and pleaded so eloquently with his blue eyes that the driver grudgingly relinquished the lines.

"Mind ye now, Mister Nesbitt, just to the corner you said."

"Meaning around it, Joe, of course," replied Nesbitt as he adjusted the lines knowingly between his gloved fingers. "Come, Spavin, cheer up, old laddie!" Williams, who had been holding the long-lashed whip, now handed it to Nesbitt, who sent the lash swirling over his head, and with a quick movement snapped it loudly a few inches from Spavin's head. The result was instantaneous. The off horse snorted loudly and leaped forward, and the other followed suit. "Old Joe" snatched at the reins, but Nesbitt held them out of reach.

"Don't whip 'em, sir," cried the old man, "please don't whip 'em; they ain't used to it, sir." Nesbitt laughed gaily.

"Don't you worry, Joe, I'll not hurt them. But we can't put on side, old chap, unless we just touch them up a bit."

Crack went the long lash again.

For several years the grays had traveled the road from station to school and thence to the Eagle Tavern without other persuasion than a cheery chirp or a sharp whistle from "Old Joe," or, upon rare occasions, a half-hearted snap of the whip in no startling proximity to their ears. To-day there was plainly something wrong, and so, after a moment of bewildered consideration, they broke into a long ungainly gallop, to the joy of the boy with the reins and to the terror of "Old Joe."

"By Jove, Williams, this is something like, eh?" Nesbitt sat up straight on the seat, tightened the lines and grinned delightedly at his companion. "Old Joe" was pleading excitedly for the whip.

"Please, sir, give me the whip now. I'm afeared for you to have it. You might hit 'em, sir, accidental, an' there's no telling what they'd do. Mister Williams, sir, just you hand it to me. *Stop him!*" But he had spoken too late. Nesbitt brought the lash down smartly on the broad back of the off horse, and the gallop changed to a plunging run, the coach swaying awkwardly from side to side. "Old Joe" reached forward desperately to wrest the lines from the boy, but Williams interfered.

"Hands off, Joe," cried Nesbitt, "or you'll have us over. Keep him quiet, Williams."

From inside the stage came a babel of shouts, the exclamations of alarm half drowned by the noise of the beat-

ing hoofs and the protesting creaks of the leather springs. The horses with heads down, frightened at length by the unwonted use of the whip, galloped madly. Nesbitt, smiling and cool, sat straight and handled the lines with skill, which at any other time would have won loud commendation from "Old Joe." But just at present that worthy was too terrorized to appreciate aught but the fact that the grays were apparently running away. He had a frightful vision of an overturned coach, of mangled bodies, and of everlasting disgrace. Yet he recognized the fact that to take the lines away from Nesbitt by force, even had such a thing been possible, would be the surest way to bring about the very catastrophe he dreaded. And then he glanced ahead down the frozen road and saw the sharp turn but a short distance away.

The three youths on the seat behind had been watching affairs at first with amusement and now with apprehension. The boy in the center frowned and turned to one of his companions.

"Who is that chap?" he asked in a low voice.

"What! don't you know 'Is 'Ighness'?"

"'His Highness'? No, I don't. Who is he; one of our class?"

"No; he's an upper middle chap; Trevor Nesbitt's his real name. The fellows call him 'Is 'Ighness' because he's English. He's a good sort, all right, but I wish he'd let driving alone."

"So do I," responded the boy at the other end of the seat, "but"—a note of admiration creeping into his dubious tones—"he knows how, all right!"

"But, I say, Hope," cried the previous speaker, "look there; we've got to go around that corner! Let's say our prayers." Hope's brows contracted as he glanced ahead; then he slid from the seat, rested himself on his knee, clinging tightly the while, and leaned over the back of the seat ahead.

"Look here, can you get them around that turn?"

"Who's that, Williams?" asked Nesbitt without looking around.

"Dick Hope; he wants to know——"

"Tell him to shut up and sit down, Williams," interrupted Nesbitt calmly. Hope flushed angrily, but said no more, crouching in his place between the seats with an idea of lending a hand in case of disaster, although in just what way he could be of use was far from clear. Nesbitt raised to his feet, propping himself firmly, the reins tight wrapped about his hands.

"Hold tight all," he warned, "and bear to the right!"

With the turn but a few yards away he brought his weight to bear on the lines, swaying from side to side with the lurching coach, settling farther and farther back as the horses lowered their heads to the command of the tugging bits. Hope thought of "Old Joe" at that moment, and glanced across at him. The stage-driver was silent now, his

cheeks white, his face drawn. Williams, too, was pale, and his rigid attitude told more plainly than words that the fun had ceased for him. Nesbitt alone of the three occupants of the box appeared at ease. Hope could see the warm color playing on his cheek, and——

"Easy, boys, easy!" Nesbitt called slowly, soothingly to the horses, and then— Well, Hope was clutching desperately at the boards in the grating; he saw the backs of the straining animals turn at an angle to the stage, heard the great wheels *slur-r-r* across the frozen ground, felt the body of the coach sway far to the left, as though it were on its way across the fence at that side, and opened his eyes again to find a straight road ahead of them, and to see Nesbitt settle himself into his seat once more. "Old Joe" muttered an exclamation of relief. Hope again leaned across Nesbitt's shoulder.

"I think you've shown off enough for to-day," he said. "Now pull those horses down—if you can."

Nesbitt glanced back into the other's face, an angry light in his blue eyes.

"Will you kindly attend to your own affairs?" he asked with suspicious sweetness. Hope smiled in spite of his anger.

"If you don't think it's my affair," he replied, "maybe you'll acknowledge that the gentlemen ahead have something to say about it." Nesbitt looked up the road and whistled.

"Just my bally luck!" he murmured. "Professors!" With straining arms he bore back on the lines. Little by little the horses slackened speed, and at last dropped into a trot, but not before the coach had swept by two very serious-faced Hillton professors out for a walk, whose sharp glances presaged trouble. Nesbitt handed over the lines and whip to "Old Joe."

"My luck again," he sighed.

"An' serves you right," grunted the driver.

Hope crawled into his seat again. His companions were busy explaining the course of events to the inhabitants of the interior of the coach, or as many of them as could get their heads out the doors, and ere the latter had run out of questions the stage turned into the academy grounds and crawled sedately up to the steps of Academy Building.

Hope leaped from the coach and hurried off to his room, while the other boys, laughing and joking, clustered about Nesbitt. "Wheels won't do a thing to you," one lad assured him with a grin.

"Well, don't let it trouble you, Tommy," he answered gaily. "But, I say, Williams, who was that meddlesome chap on the back seat?"

It was Williams's turn to grin.

"The fellow you told to shut up, you mean?" Nesbitt nodded.

"Oh, no one much; just Dick Hope, captain of the crew."

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING DICK HOPE

The sun was almost out of sight as Dick Hope crossed the yard toward Masters Hall, and the shadows of the buildings, stretching far over the ground, seemed to harbor many little gusts of icy wind, and looked dark and dismal in contrast with the broad expanse of golden, sun-bathed marsh across the river. Dick pulled his coat closer about him, ran up the old, worn granite steps of the dormitory, and gained the hallway with a sense of comfort and homecoming.

Securing his key from the matron's room, he leaped up the first flight of narrow stairs and, half-way down the corridor, unlocked a dingy door which bore a big black figure 16, and, below it, a card with the inscription "Richard Fowler Hope." The room was filled with the mellow light of the setting sun, and here and there the rays were caught—by the glass doors of the bookcase, by the metal top of the inkstand, or, less sharply, by the silver and pewter mugs ranged along the mantel—and were thrown back in golden blurs that dazzled the eyes.

Dick laid aside his coat and cap, took off his gloves, and

thrusting his hands into his pocket, surveyed the apartment smilingly. It was awfully jolly to get back, he thought happily, as his gaze took in the shabby, comfortable furnishings and the hundred and one objects about the room so intimately connected with three and a half years of pleasant school life. An array of worn and soberly bound books lined an end of the leather-covered study table, and he took one up and fluttered its pages between his fingers; it was a good deal like shaking hands with an old friend. With the volume still in his clasp he moved to the mantel and examined the knickknacks thereon, the cups and photographs and little china things, all cheap enough viewed from a money standpoint, yet to Dick priceless from long possession. He felt a momentary heart-flutter as his eyes fell on one pewter mug ornately engraved with his name.

As he looked the mantel and wall faded from sight, and he saw a stretch of cinder track, pecked by the spikes of runners' shoes; at a little distance a thin white tape. He saw himself, head back, eyes staring, struggling desperately for that white thread across the track. Again he heard the thud and crunch of the St. Eustace runner's feet almost beside him; heard, far more dimly, the shouts of excited onlookers, and again felt his effortful gasps as he gained inch by inch. The captain of the track team had been the first to reach him as the tape fluttered to the ground and he turned, half reeling, onto the turf. And he had thrown an arm about him and lowered him gently to the

welcome sod and had whispered three short words into his ear, words that meant more than volumes of praise:

"Good work, Dick!"

The vision faded and the boy, with a sigh that expressed more happiness than a laugh could have done, turned away from the mantel. The crimson silk sash-curtains, drawn to the sides of the two windows, glowed like fire, but the shafts of sunlight had traveled up the walls to the ceiling, and the study was growing dim. In the fireplace a pile of wood and shavings was ready to light, and Dick, scratching a match along the mantel edge, set it ablaze and drew an easy chair to the hearth. With the shabby school-book in his hands, he settled comfortably against the cushions, and, his gaze on the leaping flames, let his thoughts wander as they willed.

There was plenty to think of. Before him lay five of the busiest, most important months of his school life, months that would be filled with plenty of hard work, much pleasure, and probably not a little worriment, and which might be crowned with a double triumph for him, for his hopes were set upon graduating at the head of his class and upon turning out a crew which in the annual boat-race with Hillton's well-loved rival, St. Eustace, would flaunt the crimson above the blue in a decisive victory. To attain the first result many long hours of the hardest sort of study would be necessary, while the last would require never-flagging patience, tact, courage, and skill, and would demand

well-nigh every moment of his time not given to lessons. The outlook did not, however, frighten him. He had returned to school feeling strong and confident and eager to begin his tasks.

When, the preceding June, after a sorrowful defeat by St. Eustace, the members of the Hillton crew had met to elect a new captain, Richard Hope had been chosen because he above all other candidates possessed the directness of purpose, the gift of leadership, and the untiring ability for hard work requisite to form a winning eight from unpromising material; even the defeated candidates for the post, which at Hillton was the highest and most honorable in the gift of the school, applauded the choice, and, with a possible exception, honestly felt the pleasure they expressed. The possible exception was Roy Taylor, one of the best oarsmen at Hillton. Taylor had striven hard for the captaincy and had accepted defeat with far less graciousness than had the other three candidates, though he had tried to hide his disappointment under a mask of smiling indifference. The recollection of Roy Taylor was this evening almost the only source of uneasiness to Dick as he watched the mellow flames leap and glow.

Presently he pushed back his chair, lighted the droplight on the table and drew the blinds. It was almost supper time. Throwing aside his coat, he unpacked his satchel, distributing several presents about the study. Then, with his toilet articles in hand, he opened the door into the bed-

room and started back in surprise. Between the two narrow iron bedsteads stood a pile of luggage. A dilapidated tin trunk, painted in ludicrous imitation of yellow oak, flanked a handsome leather portmanteau, while upon these was piled a motley array of bundles and bags; a tennis racquet and two cricket bats were tied together with three brightly colored neckties; a battered golf bag fairly bristled with sticks; a pair of once white flannel trousers were tied about at the ankles with strings, and were doing duty as a repository for discarded shoes, golf, tennis, and cricket balls, and sundry other treasures. The improvised bag had fallen open at the larger end and had disgorged a portion of its contents in the manner of a huge, strangely formed horn of plenty. Crowning all was a soiled clothes bag, vivid with purple lilies on a yellow ground, whose contour told plainly that it held books.

Quickly following his first moment of surprise came to Dick a knowledge of what the presence of the luggage meant, and his grin of amusement was succeeded by a frown. The boy who had shared his quarters with him at the beginning of the year had left the academy in October, and Dick had held sole possession of the rooms until now. He had been told that with the commencement of the winter term he would have a roommate, but until that moment he had forgotten the fact. He wondered as he spluttered at the wash-stand what sort of a chap his future chum was, and drew ill augury from the queer

collection of luggage. With towel in hand he walked around the pile and studied the labels and the initials that adorned trunks and bags. The former were numerous; plainly the owner of the yellow tin trunk had traveled, for a Cunard steamship label flanked a red-lettered legend "Wanted," and the two were elbowed by the paper disk of a Geneva hotel. The initials "T. N." told him nothing, save that the owner's name was probably Tom. Well, Tom was a good enough name, he thought, as he applied the brush vigorously to his brown hair, and as for the rest he would soon learn.

Drawing on his coat and lowering the light, he hurried across to Warren Hall and supper. The dining-room was well filled, and as he made his way to his seat at a far table he was obliged to return a dozen greetings, and had he paused in response to every detaining hand that was stretched out he would scarcely have reached his seat in the next half hour. It was pleasant to be back again among all those good fellows, he thought as he laughingly pulled himself free from the clutches of his friends, and pleasanter still to know that they were glad to have him back. His heart beat a little faster than usual, and his cheeks were a little more flushed as he clapped his nearest neighbor on the shoulder and sank into his chair, only to leave it the next moment and detour the table to shake hands with Professor Longworth, who had bowed to him smilingly across the board.

"Vacation seems to have agreed with you, Hope; you look as hearty as you please. You must let Mr. Beck see you before the bloom wears off; he'd rather see one of you boys looking fit than come into a legacy."

"I'm feeling fine, sir," laughed Dick, "and I'm so glad to get back that even trigonometry doesn't scare me."

"Hum," replied the professor grimly. "Just wait until you see what I've got ready for you."

Dick was soon busy satisfying a huge appetite and listening to the veritable avalanche of information and inquiry that was launched at him.

"St. Eustace has chosen the negative side in the debate, Hope, and old Tinker's tickled to death; says he's certain we'll win, because——" "Dick, come up to my cave Saturday afternoon, will you? Burns isn't coming back, and he's written me to sell his stuff, and we're going to have an auction; Smith junior's going to be auctioneer, and we're going to hang a red flag out the window, and——" "Did you hear about that upper middle chap they call 'Is 'Ighness'? He nearly upset the coach this afternoon, they say, and Professor Wheeler's going to put him on probation. Chalmers says he told Wheeler that——" "We've got some dandy hockey games fixed, Hope; Shrewsburg's coming down Monday next if the ice holds and St. Eustace about the first of Feb." "You ought to've been with us, Hope, last Saturday. We went fishing through the ice, and Jimmy Townsend caught four

regular whales; and we cooked them at the hut on the island and had a fine feast, only the silly things wouldn't get quite done through, and tasted rather nasty if you didn't hold your nose and swallow quick." "Say, have you seen Carl Gray? He told me to tell you that he'd be up to your room after supper; wants to see you most particular, he says. Don't forget I told you, 'cause I promised I would." "I'm going to try for the boat, Hope. When shall I report?" "When you make the crew, youngster, I'll win a scholarship; and that won't happen in a thousand years!" "Speaking of the crew, Dick, Roy Taylor says we're goners this year."

Dick helped himself generously to the blackberry jam

"How's that?" he asked calmly.

"Says we haven't got good material."

"If we had seven other fellows as good as Taylor we'd be all right," responded Dick. "And as it is, we've turned out cracking fine crews before this from even less promising stuff. Well, I'm off. Never mind what Todd says, Jimmy; show up with the others and have a try. I only wish there were other chaps as plucky!"

And amid mingled groans of reproach and derision Dick pushed back his chair and left the hall. When he reached the second floor of Masters he saw that the door of Number 16 was ajar, and that some one had turned up the light.

"Gray's waiting, I guess," he told himself. "Won-

der what he wants?" He pushed the door open, and then paused in surprise on the threshold.

In Dick's big green leather armchair, his slippered feet to the blaze, a book in his hands, reclined very much at his ease the youth who had driven the stage-coach.

CHAPTER III

"'IS 'IGHNESS"

At the sound of the closing door the boy in the chair glanced up, laid aside his book, and pulled himself to his feet. Despite his annoyance at what he considered the other's cheekiness in having taken possession of the study without explanation or apology, Dick was forced to a grudging admiration for the appearance of the boy who confronted him. He was such a healthy, wholesome-looking duffer, Dick thought, that it was a shame he hadn't better sense. What Dick saw across the length of the study table was a broad-shouldered youth of sixteen years, attired in a ludicrous red dressing-gown, much worn and faded, which, despite the efforts of a knotted cord about the waist, failed by several inches to envelop his form. His face was somewhat square in contour, with a chin a trifle too heavy for beauty, but, as Dick reflected, undoubtedly appropriate to the rest of the features. The eyes were intensely blue and the hair was neither brown nor straw-colored, but of some indescribable shade between. The cheeks were full of very healthy color. For the rest, the youth was of medium height, sturdily built, and, save for an easy smile

of unembarrassed greeting which annoyed Dick at the moment, was decidedly prepossessing.

During the moment of silence that followed the closing of the door, employed by Dick in a mental stock-taking of his future roommate, the latter's eyes were not idle. He had been told that Richard Hope was the captain of the crew, a position of honor which he reverenced as devoutly as only an English lad can, and he was curious to see what manner of boy filled that important office at Hillton. He saw a tall youth, muscular rather than heavy, with shoulders that filled out the coat almost to the bursting point, and a fairly small head set well back. He saw a face with clean-cut features; a straight, sensitive nose, rounded and prominent chin, eyes rather far apart, and high cheek-bones that gave a look of thinness to the face. The eyes were brown, and the hair under the cloth cap was of the same color. Above the nose were two distinct short vertical lines, the result of a habit of drawing the brows together into something approaching a frown when anxious or puzzled. Just at present the lines were deep, and the general expression of the face was one of ill-concealed annoyance. It was the boy in the queer red dressing-gown that first broke the silence.

"I fancy you're Hope," he said smilingly. "My name's Nesbitt, Trevor Nesbitt, upper middle; I'm to share your quarters, you know."

"I'm very glad to know you," answered Dick, with-

out, however, much of delight in his tones. "I saw your luggage in the room before supper, although, of course, I didn't know that it belonged to—er——"

"To the beggar that was so cheeky on the coach, eh?" said Trevor. "I didn't know it myself—that is, until I went to the office. They told me before recess that they'd put me in a room in Masters, but I didn't know who I was to be with. I——" He paused, with the slightest look of embarrassment. "Fact is, I want to apologize for what I said on the coach. I didn't mean to be waxy, but those bally gees pulled so like thunder—and I didn't know who you were, of course, and——"

"It's all right," answered Dick. "I wouldn't have interfered only I thought you were going to upset us, and, being a senior, it was my duty, you understand."

"Of course, I see that," responded Trevor earnestly. "You were right to do what you did, and you ought to have beat my silly head for me. You can now, you know, if you like."

Dick smiled, and then was sorry. He had meant to maintain a lofty expression of hauteur, in order to impress Trevor with the fact that while he was willing to pass the other's impertinence on the coach he could never bring himself to an approval of a youth who so needlessly endangered the lives of his companions in order to satisfy a selfish whim, and who had so stubbornly transgressed the Rules of the School (the latter suddenly appeared unusually

sacred to Dick, and he mentally spelled it with capital letters). But the smile had, he feared, somewhat spoiled his effort. He hastened to reassume his expression of calm disapprobation, and asked:

"Did Professor Wheeler learn of it?" He had thrown aside his coat and had seated himself before the hearth. Trevor perched himself on an arm of the big chair and smiled a trifle ruefully.

"Yes; I had a long talk with Wheels. I fancy he said some very good things, but I was so beastly hungry that I'm not certain. He told me to stay in the Yard for a couple of weeks; rather nasty of him, don't you think?"

"Well, Nesbitt, under the circumstances, of course——" began Dick. Then he paused as he saw, or thought he saw, a twinkle of amusement in the blue eyes before him.

"Oh, well, two weeks is soon over with, and I had lots of fun while it lasted." Trevor smiled reminiscently.

"You had driven before, I suppose?" asked Dick with supreme indifference.

"Yes; the pater and I used to do a good bit that way at home—in England, you know—and then last summer at Richfield I kept a nag or two rather busy."

"Have you been in this country long?" Dick really didn't care, of course, but one had to make conversation.

"Four years; the pater came over here to look after his business and brought me with him; the manager died. Then we thought—that is, the pater did—that he'd better

stay in New York and look after the American agency himself for awhile. And we've been here ever since. Last summer we decided that I'd better go to school somewhere. The pater wanted me to go back to the other side and enter Rugby, but I rather fancied staying over here; so I found out about American schools, and when some one told me that Hillton generally turned out the best eights I decided to go there." Dick displayed interest.

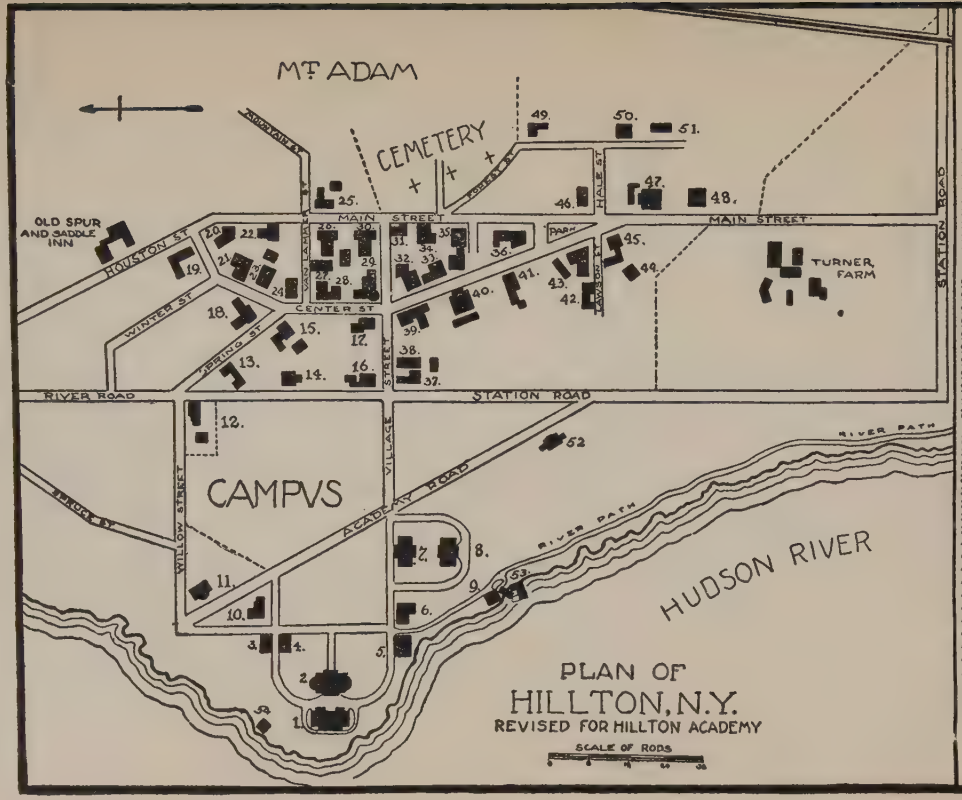
"Do you row?" he asked almost eagerly.

"I've rowed a little when I've had a chance, which hasn't been often. Americans don't seem to do much that way. When I was a little chap I was a good bit of a wetbob, and was on the water a good deal. The pater taught me all I know when I was about twelve; he rowed stroke two years in the Cambridge boat."

"Well, I hope you'll try for the crew," answered Dick, with kindly condescension. "We want all the candidates we can get; and even if you don't make the varsity boat this spring, there's the second; and you'd have a good show for next year."

"Thanks," replied Trevor calmly; "I'd made up my mind to have a try for it. I rather fancy I'll make the varsity."

Dick stared. Such confidence staggered him, and he tried to detect amusement on the other's countenance. But his new roommate was staring seriously into the flames, for all the world, Dick thought, as if he were trying to



1. Academy Building.
2. Gymnasium.
3. Physical Laboratory.
4. Chemical Laboratory.
5. Masters Hall.
6. Bradley Hall.
7. Turner Hall.
8. Warren Hall.
9. Society House.
10. Principal's residence.
11. Hampton House.
12. Professor Bowles.
13. Mrs. S. R. Higgins. B. and R.*
14. J. P. Bromfield. R.
15. J. A. Wurzbach. R.
16. Professor Lea.
17. W. H. Vance. B. and R.
18. A. L. Hutchins. R.
19. Miss P. R. Long. R.
20. Dr. Wainwright.
21. Methodist Church.
22. H. D. Robins.
23. J. A. Hamilton. R.
24. T. H. Brown. B. and R.
25. Kingston House.
26. Congregational Church.
27. L. H. Bickford.
28. Mrs. A. V. Knoedler. R.
29. N. D. Hawood. R.
30. L. Beard.
31. L. S. Scott.
32. Merrill House.
33. Porter's store.
34. J. J. O'Neill. R.
35. Grammar School.
36. Baptist Church.
37. Caper's store.
38. Post-Office.
39. Court-House.
40. Town Hall.
41. Primary School.
42. Watson's Stables.
43. Eagle Tavern
44. S. W. Hammont. B.
45. H. MacFarland.
46. W. W. Carroll. B. and R.
47. Episcopal Church.
48. D. W. Coolidge. B. and R.
49. H. M Gibbs. R.
50. C. E. Noyes. R.
51. Miss O. Jasper. R.
52. Joseph Grace Hospital.
53. Boat-riouse.
54. Heating plant.

* B, board.
R, rooms to let.

decide whether to accept the place at bow or stroke. Trevor swung himself from the chair arm and tried to wrap his dressing-gown closer about him.

"Well, I fancy I'd better get that luggage out of the way. I didn't want to unpack until you came and could tell me where to put the things. I've got a few pictures and some books, you know."

"You can have either side of the study you want," answered Dick. "I was alone and so I stuck my things all round. If you like I'll take my stuff off that wall there."

"Oh, but I say," expostulated the other, "don't do that. You've got the den looking so jolly nice it would be too bad to spoil it by taking anything down. I'll just stick one or two of my chromo things where there's room. I never was much at fixing up; my den always looks like a bally stable."

He passed into the bedroom and Dick heard him pulling at knots and straps and between whiles whistling a lugubrious tune that sounded all flats. Dick spread his feet apart comfortably, thrust his hands into his pockets and smiled at the fire; Nesbitt's cock-suredness was truly delightful! "He fancied he'd make the varsity!" Dick's grin enlarged and he chuckled softly. He almost wished that it wasn't necessary for him to dislike his new roommate; there was something about the boy, possibly his placid assurance, that appealed to him. But—and Dick's smile froze again—it wouldn't do for him to even appear

to countenance such escapades and—er—cheekiness as Nesbitt had indulged in that afternoon. The youngster—he was Dick's junior by a year—must be taught that at Hillton fun is one thing and——

Dick's reverie was interrupted by the subject, who appeared with a bunch of photographs in his hand.

"Do you mind if I put a couple of these on the mantel?"

"Certainly not; it's half yours, of course."

The tone was very chilly, and Trevor's cheeks flushed slightly as he arranged the pictures behind the army of mugs. He started away and then came back again, and, taking a photograph from its place, looked hesitatingly at Dick, who was apparently supremely indifferent to his presence.

"That's the pater," he said finally, holding out the card, and speaking a little wistfully. Dick took the picture. It showed a middle-aged man, rather military looking, in riding clothes; a fine, handsome chap, Dick thought, and, having no quarrel with Trevor's father, he said so:

"He's awfully good-looking, Nesbitt."

Trevor took the photograph and observed it a moment with smiling eyes ere he placed it back on the mantel. He was evidently monstrously proud of his father; but he only replied with elaborate indifference:

"He's rather a good sort, the pater." He took the rest of the pictures down and held them out. "Here's some

more if you care to see them." Dick pretended to smother a yawn. "Thanks," he said.

"I'm not boring you?" asked Trevor apologetically.

"No, indeed." Dick was looking at the likeness of an elderly woman in a high lace cap. "Not your mother, is it?"

"No, that is my Aunt Grace; she lives in Manchester. I haven't a picture of the mater here; we have only one, and the pater keeps that. She—she died when I was quite a youngster."

"Oh," said Dick softly. "I'm sorry. Mothers are—well, I wouldn't want to lose mine, Nesbitt."

"I fancy not. We—the pater and I—were awfully cut up when the mater died. That's a cousin of mine; he's at Rugby."

The picture showed a stolid-looking boy with decidedly heavy features attired in flannels and leaning with studied carelessness on a cricket bat. It was typically English, Dick thought as he laid it aside. A photograph with "Maud" scrawled across the bottom in high angular characters showed a conscious-looking young lady of eighteen or nineteen years simpering from a latticed doorway. "That's Cousin Maud," explained Trevor; "she's engaged to a lieutenant of engineers in South Africa; she's a jolly nice girl." When Dick had seen the last of the photographs Trevor rearranged them on the mantel, and while he was doing so there came a knock at the study door, fol-

lowed by the entrance of a youth in a long ulster on which the snowflakes were melting.

"Hello, Earle, come in!" cried Dick, arising and shaking hands with the newcomer. "Where's Carl?"

Stewart Earle, a slim, bright-faced boy of apparently fourteen years of age, shook the flakes from his coat and drew a note from his pocket.

"He couldn't come over, Hope, so he asked me to bring this to you. I had to come over to the library. It's snowing like all get out."

Dick took the note and ran his eyes over it. The little creases deepened on his forehead as he tossed it onto the table. "Take off your coat, Earle, and sit down. By the way, do you know Nesbitt?" And as the two shook hands, "Nesbitt's going to share these quarters with me."

"Can't stay," answered Earle, "for I've got an hour's work looking up some silly stuff about some silly Grecian war. You're looking awfully fit, Hope."

"So are you," laughed Dick. "You don't look at all like the pasty-faced little junior of two years back."

"I don't feel like him, either," answered Stewart with a smile. "Shall I say anything to Carl?"

"Yes, tell him I'm awfully much obliged, and that I'll look him up to-morrow if I don't meet him at recitation. Good-night; sorry you won't stay."

When the door had closed again Dick took up the note and reread it.

"Dear Dick" (it ran), "Wheels has sent for me to go over to his house this evening; something about the indoor meeting. So I sha'n't be able to see you to-night. What I was going to tell you was that Taylor's been trying to raise trouble on the quiet with the crew fellows. He says we can't turn out a crew that will stand any show of winning, and is trying to discourage the fellows. I'll tell you more when I see you to-morrow. Stewart's going to take this over to you.

"Yours in a hurry,

"CARL.

"P. S.—Somebody ought to punch Taylor's head—hard."

Dick smiled as he tore up the missive, and then frowned. It was what he might have expected of Taylor, he told himself, and yet it was a bit discouraging. However, there was no use in meeting trouble half-way. He got a book and settled himself to study. In the bedroom Trevor was still distributing his belongings, and still whistling his tuneless air. When bedtime came Dick was silent and preoccupied, a fact which Trevor noticed.

"Hope you haven't had bad news," the latter said.

"Oh, no," answered Dick, "nothing to hurt."

Trevor turned out the gas and climbed into bed.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night," answered Dick.

For a long time the latter lay staring into the darkness thinking of Carl Gray's note, and of Roy Taylor, and of Trevor Nesbitt; a good deal of Trevor. And the more he thought, the less satisfied with himself he became. His last thought as he turned over on his pillow and closed his eyes was that he had behaved like a particularly disagreeable prig.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE GYM

Trevor left the dressing-room and climbed the stairs to the running track. The gymnasium was quiet and filled with the twilight of a winter afternoon. It was but a few minutes after three, and, save for a youth who was heroically exercising with the weights, the building appeared deserted. But as he reached the head of the stairs the soft pat of shoes on the boards greeted him, and he stepped aside to let a lithe runner jog past. He recognized him as Stewart Earle, the boy who had brought the message to Dick Hope the night before, and when he next passed he nodded.

"Hello," answered Stewart as he slowed down a little, "I didn't recognize you. Awfully dark to-day, isn't it?"

"Beastly," responded Trevor. Then, with a glance at the big clock he started into a slow jog, lifting his feet high and stretching his muscles, that were somewhat stiffened by a week's idleness. A flood of subdued white light bathed the track from the big north window, and as he passed he could hear the soft *swir* of the snowflakes against the glass. It had been snowing all night and all day, and

showed as yet no sign of abatement. The broad skylights in the roof were covered deeply, and looked from beneath like sheets of lead.

The boy at the weights stopped and disappeared into the dressing-room. Perhaps he found it lonely work there all by himself. The pat of the runners' shoes alone broke the stillness. Trevor took his pace from Stewart, and for some time the two circled the track. It was twenty-four laps to the mile, and when he had accomplished that distance Trevor went down and put in several minutes with the weights. Several other boys had entered meanwhile, and were changing outdoor clothing for gymnasium suits. When he had rubbed himself dry after a shower both, Trevor took a seat by Stewart and began to dress leisurely.

"Do you run much?" he asked.

"Yes; that is, I try. I did a mile and a half to-day. I'm going to try for the two hundred and twenty yards at the indoor meet."

"Why, so am I," answered Trevor. Stewart grimaced.

"I guess it's all up with me, then," he said ruefully. "They say you're a dandy sprinter."

"Oh, I'm not much. I suppose there are lots of entries, eh?"

"Only about sixteen, I think. You're one of the upper middle relay team, aren't you?"

"Yes, I'm to run last, I believe. I hope we beat the seniors," laughed Trevor.

"I guess I've got more reason to want to win than you," responded Stewart. "My father and mother are coming up for the meet. We live in Poughkeepsie, you know; I'd like awfully to win that two-twenty, but I guess I won't."

"Well, I don't think you need be afraid of me," said Trevor; "I feel rather rusty to-day. Fact is, you know, I'm a bit too heavy on my legs for sprints, I fancy. I think I'll chuck it after Saturday night; I'm going to try for the crew."

"Are you?" said Stewart admiringly. "You look as though you'd make a cracking good oar. I sometimes think I'd like to try for the crew; perhaps I can year after next; Beck doesn't want me to now, he says."

"Doesn't want you to? Do you mean he's forbid you?"

"N-no, he hasn't forbidden me; but I always do as he tells me. You see"—Stewart paused in the middle of a struggle with a white sweater—"Beck's done all sorts of things for me. Why, when I came here a year ago last fall I only weighed about eighty pounds; I was always tired, and didn't have any—any ambition for anything; used to sit in my room and read. Of course there's no harm in reading, but I didn't seem to do anything else; Gray—I room with him over in the village—Gray used to call me the 'White Mouse.' I guess I was a pretty poor-looking youngster. Well, Professor Beck got hold of me

one day and induced me to take up a course of training; of course I'd been doing my two days a week here at the weights and things, but I always shirked and got tired, and it never did me any good, I guess. But Beck made me take walks, wouldn't let me eat anything but what was on a list he gave me, and put me at weights. Finally he got me to try jumping, and then running. I liked running right away. First thing I knew I couldn't get enough to eat, it seemed; used to be hungry every meal. Then I entered the four hundred and forty yards last winter at the indoor meeting and came in second. After that I couldn't run enough. I won the four hundred and forty at the handicap meet in the spring, and wanted to go to the Interscholastic Meet, only Beck said I'd better wait until this year. Of course I'm not a Samson yet, but I'm about two hundred per cent better than I was a year or so ago. And—and Beck did it. And that's why I do what he says."

"I see," answered Trevor. "Well, Beck knows his business. You look about as fit as any chap I've seen here, and I don't blame you for giving under to him. By the way, Gray's the baseball captain, isn't he? Rather tall, thin chap?"

"Yes, he's awfully smart, regular jack-of-all-trades. He used to do stunts for the fellows, like mend golf clubs and cricket bats, and mold golf balls and things, and made pretty near enough money last year to pay his board

and room rent. But he got the Carmichael scholarship last winter, and so he doesn't do much of that sort this term. This is his second year as captain of the nine, and I guess he could be captain again if he was going to be here, but he goes up to college next fall. He—he's been a—he's been awfully kind to me—ever since I came here." Stewart glanced rather apologetically at Trevor, doubtful as to whether he would feel a schoolboy's contempt for the trace of feeling that he had unintentionally allowed to creep into his tones. But Trevor smiled understandingly.

"Must be a good sort," he answered sympathetically. "Hello, here's Hope."

Dick approached and nodded smilingly to the two. He had a slip of paper in his hand, and as he greeted them he glanced over the dressing-room as though in search of some one.

"Have either of you fellows seen Professor Beck?" Both replied in the negative, and Dick folded up the slip and placed it in his pocket. "I've been looking all over the place for him; wanted to see him about the crew candidates. By the way, Nesbitt, we want you to report here a week from Tuesday at four o'clock. I'm going to post the notices this evening. Carl tells me you're going to try for the two hundred and twenty yards, Stewart?"

"Yes, I'm down for it, but Nesbitt here says he's entered too, and I'm rather doubtful of my chances now."

"I didn't know you ran," said Dick, turning to Trevor.

"Oh, yes, I run a bit, now and then. I've been jogging round the track and feel as stiff as a poker."

"That'll wear off all right. I was stiff myself to-day—at recitations."

"I should say so," exclaimed Stewart. "I honestly didn't know a thing. I think they ought to give us a day after recess to get caught up with things; a fellow can't do any studying the night he gets back to school. I went to the library last night and almost fell asleep over an encyclopedia."

"Well, you did better than I did. I scarcely looked into a book."

"Ditto," said Trevor. "'Turkey' gave us fits; there wasn't a chap in the English class knew what the lesson was."

"Well, I'm going to have a go at the weights," said Dick. "See you two later."

"And I guess I'll go back to the room," said Stewart. "If you haven't anything better to do, Nesbitt, you might walk over that way."

"Thanks, but Wheels is rather careful of my health just now, and doesn't want me to leave the grounds; he's afraid I might get my feet wet, I fancy; so I'll come over and see you some other time. I have half an idea to do some studying, just to be queer."

The two went out together, and Dick, opening his locker, proceeded to attire himself in his gymnasium

clothes. The room had filled up with boys, and he was kept busy answering questions about the crew. A big youth in a blue-and-white striped sweater entered, and, seeing Dick, made for him at once.

"Say, Hope, is it so that we're not going to have any crew this spring?"

"No, it's not so. We're going to have the best crew that we ever put into the water," answered Dick. "Who told you such rot as that?"

"Blessed if I know who did say it, but I've heard one or two fellows talking about it. I'm glad there's no truth in it, old chap; I didn't think there was, you know. When are we going to work?"

"Report a week from Tuesday at four, will you? I guess we'll start the trouble about the fifteenth. And say, Crocker, if you hear any one talking nonsense about no crew or poor material, just call them down, will you? There's nothing in it, and it's hard enough anyhow to get the fellows to turn out without any rumors of that sort."

"All right."

Crocker swung himself off, and Dick went into the gymnasium and set to work at the weights. With the cords over his shoulders and the irons sliding rhythmically in the box, he began to go over in his mind a conversation he had had a half hour before with Carl Gray. Carl's information had not been encouraging, and Dick was more wor-

ried than he liked to own even to himself. Carl had stayed at the academy during the recess, as had Roy Taylor—the first for financial reasons, the latter because his home was half-way across the continent. According to Carl, Taylor had been very active for a week past in predicting a failure for the crew among the old men and the possible candidates. He could have but one end in view, to discourage the fellows, and render it difficult, if not impossible, for Dick to get enough good men to form a winning eight. The worst of it was, he reflected, that Taylor's manner of creating discouragement was so artful that it was out of the question to charge him with it. Even during his loudest talk about the uselessness of trying to form a good crew, he never failed to announce his intention of reporting for practice and of doing all in his power to avert the impending defeat. And now, as evidenced by Crocker's remark a few minutes since, he had even managed to gain circulation for the report that there was to be no crew at all!

Dick changed his position, pulling the grips with half-arm movement to his shoulders, and frowned wrathfully at the wall. Carl was right, he told himself; Taylor deserved to have his head punched! That, however, was the last remedy to be considered, if only for the reason that to lose Taylor from the boat meant almost certain defeat. For the big Nebraskan was without any doubt the best man at Number 7 that a Hillton crew had had for many years—

strong, a hard worker, and an excellent oar. Plainly the last thing to do was to antagonize him. Besides, he was popular among quite a lot of the fellows, and his word undoubtedly had weight; another reason for making almost any sacrifice to retain his good-will. If there was only another man to take his place at Number 7, thought Dick, tugging the cords viciously, he'd mighty soon spoil his game, but—he ran quickly over the fellows who by any possible stretch of the imagination might be considered material for Taylor's position in the boat, and sighed. There was no one. It might be that there was one among the newer candidates who, by dint of hard work, could be fashioned into a good Number 7, but to lose Taylor for such a possibility was risky work. No, the only course was to apparently know nothing of Taylor's underhand work, to undo it as best he could, and to at all hazards keep him in the crew. For a moment Dick wished that Taylor had been made captain.

"Hello, Hope!"

Dick turned to find a big, good-looking youth of eighteen with a rather florid complexion and black eyes and hair smiling broadly upon him. He was dressed in knitted tights and jersey that showed an almost perfect form, and swung a pair of boxing-gloves in one hand.

"Hello, Taylor," answered Dick, forcing himself to return the smile. "How are you?"

"First-rate. Glad to see you back. Some one said you

were in here, and I thought I'd look you up; wanted to ask about crew practice. When are the fellows going to report?"

"Tuesday week."

"All right; I'll be on hand. Rather a tough outlook, though, I expect."

"Oh, I don't know; we've enough of last year's fellows to make a good basis for the new crew. I think we'll do pretty well."

Taylor shook his head sadly, then looked up and smiled brightly.

"Well, never say die, eh? We must all do our best. You can count on me, you know, old fellow. In fact, I've been drumming up trade already; persuaded quite a bunch of chaps to report. The trouble is that they don't seem to think it's worth while; seem to be cock-sure that we'll be beaten."

"Do they? I haven't heard anything of that sort. There isn't any good reason for it, anyhow."

"Oh, come now, Hope, you'll have to own up we've got a hard row to hoe. I wouldn't say so to any one else, you understand, but just between ourselves, I don't think we've got the ghost of a show."

"Well," answered Dick smilingly, "all the more reason for hard work. And for goodness' sake, don't let the fellows hear you talking that way."

"Me? I guess not," protested Taylor. "I know better

than that, I hope! Well, I'm going to have a bout with Miller; see you again."

As the other turned and crossed the floor, Dick became possessed of an almost overwhelming desire to follow him and call him to account; to have it out with him then and there, and, if necessary, to—to—— His fists clenched themselves and he set his teeth together. He was glad when Taylor passed from sight. Turning again to the weights he seized the cords and for many minutes the irons bumped and banged up and down in the slides as though—well, as though some one thereabouts was hopping mad.

CHAPTER V

THE INDOOR MEETING

The gymnasium was brilliantly lighted, and the seats that had been placed under the balconies were well filled, for, despite the inclemency of the weather, the town folks had turned out in force for the indoor meeting. The floor had been cleared of standards and bars, while ropes, rings, and trapezes had been relegated to the dim recesses of the arching roof. A running track had been roped off on the main floor, with inclined platforms at the corners of the hall to aid the runners at the turns, while the regular track above was turned into a temporary gallery from which the fellows who were not going to compete—and there were about a hundred and fifty of them—viewed the fun, leaning far over the railing, laughing, shouting, and singing excitedly. The four classes had gathered each to itself as far as was possible; the seniors on the left, the upper middle class on the right, the lower middle at one end of the hall and the juniors at the other. In front of them long draperies of class colors festooned the railing, and class challenged class with cheers and songs, and the Hillton band struggled bravely with a popular march.

The trial heats in several of the events had already been run off, and in the middle of the floor a number of contestants were putting a canvas-covered twelve-pound shot with varying success when Stewart Earle, accompanied by Trevor Nesbitt, left the dressing-room, and pushing their way through the narrow aisles between the rows of chairs, at last reached the former's father and mother, who, in company with a tall and slender boy of sixteen, occupied seats next to the improvised barrier that divided audience from running track.

"I want you to know Trevor Nesbitt," said Stewart. "Nesbitt, my mother and father. And that little boy beyond there is Master Carl Gray." Trevor shook hands with a small, middle-aged gentleman in sober black, who peered upward at him in a manner that suggested near-sightedness, and with a lady somewhat younger than her husband, whose plain but kind face and sweet voice at once won his heart. As Gray was quite beyond reach of his hand, he merely accorded that youth a smiling nod. Stewart was still talking.

"You remember, mother, I told you that Nesbitt was going to run in the two hundred and twenty yards, don't you? Well, the funny part of it is that we ran a dead heat in the first trial! I guess I'm a goner already." He ended with a smile that only partly concealed his uneasiness.

His mother smiled from him to Trevor.

"Then you two boys will run together?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," answered Trevor. "There's five of us left for the final."

"That's very nice," she replied, "for if Stewart is beaten he will not feel so badly if you are the winner, will you, dear?"

Trevor muttered something about there being no danger of his winning, while Stewart answered gaily: "But you're leaving the other three chaps out of the game, mother; perhaps one of them will beat us both."

"No fear," said Carl Gray; "Dunlop's a stiff, Wharton isn't in your class, Stew, and as for Milkam, well, I think you can beat him out all right at a hop; so it's between you and Nesbitt, and may the best man win."

"That's right," said Mr. Earle, nodding his head approvingly. "If your friend is a better runner than you, Stewart, he should win, of course. When do you race?" He held a program up to his eyes and scowled in an endeavor to decipher the lines.

"In about twenty minutes, I guess. Let me see, father." Stewart took the program. "'Twenty-yard dash, junior; twenty-yard dash, senior; putting twelve-pound shot; running high jump; one-mile run; pole vault; sixty-yard hurdle; eight-hundred-and-eighty-yard run; two-hundred-and-twenty-yard dash; relay race, one mile, lower middle class versus junior class; relay race, one mile, senior class versus upper middle class.' Well, you can't tell by this,

I guess; they'll just pull off the events when they feel like it."

"All out for the eight hundred and eighty yards," cried a voice across the building.

"There, see?" said Stewart. "That event's down after the hurdles; you can't tell much by the program; you never can. I wish they'd call the two hundred and twenty now, though."

"Getting nervous, Stew?" asked Carl Gray.

"A little, I guess. There they come for the half mile. Look, there's Keeler of our class; he's one of our relay team; isn't he a peach?"

"A what, dear?" asked his mother.

"A—er—well, I mean isn't he fine?" stammered Stewart, while Carl and Trevor exchanged grins.

"Is he? He looks from here dreadfully thin," answered Mrs. Earle.

"That's partly what makes him a good runner," explained Stewart. "He's all muscle, scarcely any weight to carry."

"Well, dear, I do hope you won't get to looking like that."

"Humph, I should hope not." This from Stewart's father. The bunch of ten runners had left the mark, and had begun their long series of tours about the track, cheered from the gallery by their fellows. "Go it, Keeler!" shouted Stewart as a youth with ludicrously long legs

ambled past, almost the last of the group. A quick glance and a fleeting grin from a queer, good-humored, and very freckled face answered Stewart's cry, and the runners swept by, their feet pounding loudly as they took the inclines at the turns. The shot putting was over and the victor, a dumpy-looking boy with the lower middle class colors across his shirt, had been clamorously hailed as he walked off with superb dignity, and the vaulting standards were being put in place while a group of half a dozen youths trod gingerly about looking very serious and important. Finally the bar was up, with a white handkerchief across it, and one after another of the contestants, with the long pole in their hands, ran lightly forward, rose till their white-clad bodies swung out from the staff like pennants, and dropped across the bar.

"Why, how easily they do it!" cried Mrs. Earle admiringly, and Stewart's father clapped his hands vigorously.

"Huh," said Stewart, "that's nothing; they haven't begun yet; just wait until they get that bar up to about nine feet."

"Nine feet! Why, how high is it now, dear?"

"'Bout seven foot eight, I should think; eh, Carl?"

"There it goes to the even eight," answered Carl, as the judges raised the bar.

"Is—is there any danger of their falling, Carl," asked Mrs. Earle.

"Not a bit, and if they do they'll hit the mattress. I say, Stew, look at Keeler."

The runners had completed half the distance, and as they again swept by the freckled-faced and long-legged lower middle class boy left his place near the rear of the procession, and with an easy spurt placed himself in the first group. The three boys added their applause to that which thundered down from the far end of the gallery.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he won," said Trevor. "He's running easy and has lots more spurt left, to look at him. But, of course, Manning is a pretty tough proposition, I fancy."

"Manning isn't what he cracks himself up to be," said Carl decidedly. "And I'll just bet you that Keeler wins out easily."

A bell clanged warningly, and the tumult in the gallery increased. "Last lap, fellows! Last lap!" "Go it, Freckles!" "Brace up, Manning! Come on, come on!" But Manning couldn't "come on" to any great extent, and the lower middle boys, leaning perilously over the edge of the gallery, fluttered their colors frantically and shouted incoherent advice, entreaty, and triumph as Keeler, his long legs working like a well-lubricated machine, his freckled face overspread with an easy and confident smile, swept superbly by the exhausted Manning and two other runners and crossed the line, as Carl had predicted, an easy winner.

When the tumult had subsided to some extent the trial heats in the senior twenty-yard dash were begun, the track being diagonally across the floor, and bunch after bunch of white-clad youths raced like the wind toward the tape. The pole vaulting came to an end with a record-breaking accomplishment of nine feet two inches by a member of the upper middle class, and the running high jump began. Then, "All out for the two-twenty, and hurry up!" came the command from somewhere, and Stewart and Trevor struggled through the throng toward the dressing-room to throw aside their wraps.

A minute or two later five boys stood on their marks awaiting the report of the starter's pistol. Trevor found himself by the side of Dunlop; then came Stewart, Milkam, and Wharton. There was a golden haze of floating dust in the air, and the faces of Stewart's father and mother and of Carl Gray were indistinct across the building.

"Ready!"

"Get set!"

There was an intense silence about the starting-line, but from above came a deep sound of lowered voices, subdued laughter and the tramping of restless, excited feet.

"*Bang!*"

And ere the report had wholly died away the five runners were a quarter-way about the track on the first of the three laps constituting the two hundred and twenty yards.

As they passed under the left side of the gallery the

seniors leaned over in an endeavor to catch sight of them and urged their two heroes, Wharton and Milkam, with eager cries. Then the turn was made, and Trevor, glancing upward fleetingly, saw a long row of faces peering down with open mouths from which came shouts of "Nesbitt! Nesbitt!" "Dunlop! Dunlop!" A long banner of upper middle class colors writhed serpent-like above him, and then he was under the gallery, running swiftly. Now and then he caught a blare of a merry two-step from the hard-worked band. He glanced aside. Stewart was even with him, his face anxious and somewhat pale. Wharton, Milkam, and Dunlop were strung out behind, but all well in the race.

Up in the gallery, on the left, sat Dick Hope among the seniors. Beside him were Williams and a stout, red-faced youth whose real name was Todd, but who was more generally known as "Toad." Dick watched the runners circle the end of the building.

"First lap's done," he said. "That roommate of mine, Nesbitt, seems to be something of a runner."

"Sure," answered Todd, "'Is 'Ighness is all right, if he *is* a bloody Englishman."

"I'd rather be English than Dutch, Toad," grinned Williams.

"Shut up, you; I'm no more Dutch than you are. Here they come! *Brace up, Wharton!*" and Todd leaned over the railing and waved his cap wildly in air.

"You might as well save your breath, I guess," said

Dick. "Wharton's out of it, and so's Milkam. The race's between Nesbitt and young Earle. And as we can't win it, I hope Earle will. He's a decent, plucky youngster; and—well, anything to beat upper middle, you know."

"You're not very loyal to your chum," grinned Williams.

"He has no business being in the upper middle," responded Dick calmly. "By Jove, look there!"

Across the gymnasium the runners were speeding down the back-stretch, Trevor and Stewart, side by side, leaving the other three farther and farther behind at every step. Wharton and Milkam were practically out of it; Dunlop was ten yards to the bad, but running strongly and apparently still capable of retrieving his lost ground. At the turn Trevor hugged the inside of the track and Stewart, smaller, lither, and speedier-looking, snuggled in close behind him. Dunlop, head back, a look of grim determination on his face, spurted until he had gained a position but a scant two yards behind Stewart.

"Good boy, Dunlop!" shouted Williams, while from across the building came a wild cry of joy from dozens of throats.

"I guess that's his last spurt," muttered Dick; "he's showing the pace."

And so it proved. The bell rang warningly, and the shouting from excited partisans increased in volume as the last lap commenced. Trevor, still ahead, increased his

On the last lap.

speed. Stewart accepted the challenge promptly, and Dunlop, after a brave but futile effort to keep his place, was left behind. Milkam and Wharton plodded along easily a full half lap in the rear until the latter, spying Dunlop's predicament, suddenly spurted, and entered the lists with him in a contest for third place, leaving Milkam, bewildered, hopelessly last.

At the second turn Trevor had given place to Stewart. When the two entered the back-stretch Trevor drew alongside his rival again, stayed there for an instant, and then drew ahead. The gymnasium was a babel of voices. The last lap was half run, and Trevor had put two yards of track between him and Stewart. Many yards behind Dunlop and Wharton were having a hot race of their own wholly unnoticed, for every eye followed the two youths whose flying feet were now pounding the incline at the third corner.

"'Is 'Ighness wins easily," said Todd, shouting to make himself heard above the shrieks of his neighbors. Dick nodded. He was sorry to see Stewart beaten, but surprised to find himself suddenly experiencing a sensation of pride in the work of his roommate. After all, he had run a great race and deserved to win; and really, when he came to think about it, Nesbitt was handicapped by greater weight, and——

"Earle's closing up!" cried Williams.

And so it was. With the contest almost over, the younger boy had forged ahead, and at the last turn secured

the inside of the track. Trevor was wobbling! Twice he swerved unsteadily, but as the home-stretch was reached appeared to pull himself together with an effort, and gallantly strove to pass Stewart. But the latter, running steadily and seemingly untired, not only held his own, but tacked another two yards onto his gain and breasted the tape an easy winner! And how lower middle did yell!

Dunlop and Wharton fought it out to the end side by side, the former securing third place by the smallest of margins.

"Well, what do you think of that!" exclaimed Williams in deep disgust as soon as he could make himself heard. "Why, 'Is 'Ighness had the race in his pocket!"

"I think——" Dick hesitated.

"What do you think?" Dick smiled.

"I think Nesbitt was beaten," he answered.

Williams viewed him in painful disgust.

"I think you're nutty," he growled. "Don't you suppose I can see when a man's beaten?"

"Not always, I guess," replied Dick enigmatically.

Whereupon Williams begged Todd to bathe Dick's head, and in the fracas that followed the amazing result of the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard dash was for the time forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELAY RACE

That evening was destined to be one of triumph for Stewart Earle and the lower middle class. In the relay race that followed the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard dash the juniors had never a chance from first to last, and lower middle's fourth man cantered home almost in time to tag the junior's last runner ere he left the mark. Stewart and Trevor viewed the contest squatting on the floor beside the seats occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Earle and Carl Gray.

Stewart's mother had welcomed victor and vanquished with impartial favor, although her pride and pleasure in her boy's success was patent to all. Stewart's father smiled near-sightedly at Trevor, and assured him that he had made a remarkable race, but his words didn't disguise for a moment the fact that he had expected Stewart to win, and that he was somewhat surprised at Trevor's thinking for a moment that he (Trevor) stood any chance of victory. Even Stewart appeared uncomfortable at his father's tone, and strove to change the subject lest Trevor should feel hurt. But the latter was genuinely glad that Stewart's parents had witnessed a victory for their son and had never

a thought of disappointment or envy. As to the reason for his sudden and unexpected giving-out, however, Trevor had little to say, and when Carl suggested that perhaps he had insufficient training since the recess he eagerly acknowledged that that might have had something to do with it.

"But I never had a hope of winning," Stewart had cried, "after the second round! I just kept on going because—well, you know—just to make as good a showing as I could. When you fell behind I was so surprised that I almost stopped."

The sixty-yard hurdle-race proved of exciting interest to Mr. and Mrs. Earle, and every one else, for that matter, and was won in the closest kind of a finish by a senior class fellow in the remarkably good time of eight seconds. The one-mile run followed, but failed to awaken much enthusiasm from the audience, who were impatient for the final event, the senior-upper middle relay race. When the mile run was half over Trevor shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Earle, and, encouraged by their hearty wishes for his success, hurried off to the dressing-room. Kernan, captain of the upper middle team, took him aside and questioned him anxiously.

"I'm afraid you're not very fit, Nesbitt. I was going to run you last, but I guess I'll let Chalmers have the final and put you second. How do you feel?"

"Spiffen!" answered Trevor heartily, "never felt better. Don't get it into your noddle that I'm done up, old chap,

and don't change the order on account of that two-twenty dash. That was judgment more than anything else——"

"Judgment!" ejaculated Kernan. "I didn't see much judgment in it!"

"That's your stupidity, Kernan. Can't stop to explain now; but just you go ahead and let me run last, like a good fellow, and I promise you you won't regret it." Kernan frowned hesitatingly; then his face cleared and he slapped Trevor on the back.

"All right, Nesbitt; run last you shall. I don't pretend to understand that two-twenty, but I'll trust you to do your work. We've got a stiff race, I guess, but we're not beaten yet. The seniors will put Taylor last, I expect; he's a good man, all right, but if we can hold onto them until the last round I think you can down him. What do you say?"

"I say you give me a fairly even start with Roy Taylor, and I'll beat him out!" answered Trevor doggedly.

"That's the stuff! Of course, I can't promise the even start, but I'll do my best, Nesbitt; and you'll do yours, I know, and——"

"Ready for the relay! All out, fellows!"

Trevor, Kernan, and the other two members of their team, Chalmers and Johnston, hurried to the starting-line, followed by four very proper-looking boys wearing the senior colors. The band, hidden from sight by a fringe of shouting juniors at the end of the gallery, played for all it was worth. The seniors and upper middle fellows were

cheering the members of their teams individually and collectively, and the uproar was tremendous.

Professor Beck, athletic director, and at present that court of last appeal, the referee, gave the instructions in quick, clear tones as the first two contestants stood on their marks. The professor was a short man who wore glasses, who always dressed faultlessly, whether for a principal's reception or an afternoon on the campus, whose slightest turn of the head or crook of the finger bespoke authority, and whose voice, ordinarily low but incisive, could swell into a very fair imitation of a speaking-trumpet on short notice. For the rest, he understood boy nature from A to Z, and beyond, and could turn a good track athlete out of anything except a wooden post, given the opportunity. Hillton fellows, when graduated from the narrow prejudices of the junior year, worshiped two local deities—Professor Wheeler, the principal, and Professor Beck; and there was a well-defined notion prevalent that should some beneficent Fate remove from the academy all the rest of the faculty things would not only continue undisturbed, but would run better than ever.

I have dealt at some length on Professor Beck because he is a person of much importance. When he dies—may the day be far!—his portrait will hang beside those of the founder and past principals in the chapel, to be outwardly guyed and inwardly reverenced by succeeding generations of loyal Hilltonians.

"Now, get them off quickly," commanded the professor. The starter cried his perfunctory "On your marks! Get set!" and then the little pistol barked with all the ferocity of a toy spaniel, and the great event of the meeting, the senior-upper middle one-mile relay race, was on.

Johnston, for the upper middle, and a youth named Cummings, for the seniors, shot off together, and began their quarter mile as though they had but one lap to accomplish instead of six. The pace was too good to last, and every one knew it, including the runners, and so, when they had made the first round of the track, they slowed down as though by mutual consent, and went at the contest in businesslike style. Seniors and upper middle classmen cheered their respective candidates, and hurled taunts across the hall.

"The U. M. is a stupid pup
Who laps his milk from out a cup;
He may have sense when he grows up
And gets to be a Senior!"

To this chanted aspersion the upper middle fellows replied with howls of derision, and started upon their own poetic catalogue of the deficiencies of the rival class, the first verse of which ran as follows:

"Said the Prof. unto the Senior:
'You must alter your demeanor,
For such ways I've never seen; you're
Quite as awkward as a hen;
Your walk is most unsightly, sir;
Pray place your feet more lightly, sir,
And always bow politely, sir,
To the Upper Middle men!'"

There were five more verses to it, and while it lasted the seniors, led by Dick and Todd, could only cheer incessantly and stamp their feet in a hopeless endeavor to drown the song.

Meanwhile the first quarter of the race was nearly over, and Johnston and Cummings, the former leading by a scant ten yards, were spurting along the back-stretch. Then the senior runner reached the line, touched hands with the next man, and dropped from the track tired and breathless just as Cummings came up and Chalmers took his place in the race.

As Johnston crossed the line Dick slipped his watch back into his pocket. "Fifty-seven and four fifths seconds!" he bawled into Williams's ear. "Johnston ought to have done better by three fifths."

Williams nodded. "We've got the start of them, however," he answered.

On the second lap Clark, the senior runner, increased the lead to a good fifteen yards, and from there on to the finish, Chalmers, try as he might and did, could not close the gap, and the second quarter was finished in the good time of fifty-seven and one fifth seconds. Kernan, the upper middle team captain, entered the race with set, determined face, and ere the first lap of the third quarter had been reeled off had raised the flagging hopes of his classmates by a wonderful burst of speed that put him on equal terms with the senior runner, Morris. At the third corner

he secured the inside of the track, and kept it during the whole of the second, third, and fourth laps, although Morris tried hard to reach him.

The shouting from the upper middle seats was wild and continuous, and the swirling banners waved riotously over Kernan as, with head back and bare legs twinkling, he sped along, every instant now lengthening the space between him and the pursuer. And then suddenly the cheers and shouts of acclaim were changed to cries of alarm and dismay. There was the sound of a fall, and a white-clad form plunged to the floor and rolled over and over. Kernan at the third corner had tripped on the incline.

Morris, racing along but a few yards behind, leaped over the rolling body, stumbled, recovered himself after a few strides, and went on. Half a dozen fellows hurried toward Kernan, but he was on his feet again before they could reach him, and, although he was plainly bruised and sore from his fall, took up the running pluckily, amid cheers. But his task was a hopeless one. Morris had used the misadventure to good purpose, and now between him and the upper middle captain a third of a lap stretched. Kernan, with white face, tried desperately to make up the lost ground, and even succeeded in doing so to some extent, but Morris's lead was too great, and that youth swept breathlessly over the line, nearly a quarter of a lap to the good, and, touching the impatient, outstretched fingers of Roy Taylor, sank exhausted to the floor.

Trevor, poised for a quick start, heard Taylor's feet resounding over the first incline as Kernan, staggering by, touched his hand for a fleeting instant and toppled over. With a dash Trevor took up the running. A quarter of a lap was more than he had bargained for when he had professed his ability to beat Roy Taylor, but he was not discouraged. He knew Taylor well; knew that that youth was a fast and steady runner at quarter- and half-mile distances, but knew also that, while a spurt at the finish was quite within Taylor's powers, a series of fast dashes had the effect of worrying and exciting him. Trevor laid his plans accordingly. He realized intuitively that he was in better condition than his rival for hard and fast work; he had run in the two-hundred-and-twenty-yard event, while Taylor had not been on the track before that evening; a fact which, in Trevor's present good physical shape, worked to his advantage; his former race, despite his defeat, had served to put him into excellent condition for this one. He ran easily, maintaining the distance between Taylor and himself, and at the commencement of the second of the six laps constituting the last quarter of the race he was still a quarter of a lap behind.

"That's good work, Nesbitt," cried Kernan, who, sprawled out on a mattress, was at last beginning to find his breath once more. The band was almost vainly striving to make its brazen notes heard above the shouting of the students, while pennants of class colors writhed serpent-like

in the air, and seniors and upper middle classmen hurled defiant cheers at each other across the intervening space. The lower middle boys and the juniors cheered indiscriminately, although there was a tendency among the latter class to uphold the seniors. Dick, Williams, Todd, and their companions leaned over the railing and watched the contest excitedly. Trevor and Taylor had begun the second lap, the former with eyes intent upon the youth ahead, the latter running with a great show of style, and with an easy and confident smile upon his face.

"Taylor runs just as he does everything," grumbled Todd, "with one eye on the gallery."

"He does like to show off," assented Williams. "Hello!"

A roar went up from floor and balcony, and Roy Taylor, just mounting the second incline, turned his head to see Trevor coming up on him like a whirlwind. Instantly he leaped away, and the seniors, for a moment dismayed, gave voice to their relief and approval. Trevor settled down into his former pace, well satisfied, for by that unexpected spurt he had taken off nearly a half of the distance that had separated him from his opponent. Taylor, as soon as he saw the danger over, settled back into his former even but not extraordinary pace, and finished the second lap running well within himself. The third lap began with more encouraging prospects for the upper middle class.

CHAPTER VII

TREVOR'S VICTORY

"I DON'T like Taylor's letting 'Is 'Ighness creep up on him that way," objected Williams. "He was napping; and he'll need every foot he can get before the race is over."

"Nesbitt's doing some head-work," answered Dick, with a note of admiration in his voice, "and I wouldn't be surprised to see him get the best of Taylor yet. If he can keep up—— Look there!"

Trevor was at his former tactics. Just as Taylor reached the second corner the upper middle boy fairly threw himself forward, and ere the senior runner had taken alarm had closed up with him until a mere six yards intervened. The upper middle fellows howled with delight, and the seniors, striving to hide their dismay, cheered lustily. Taylor's face wore a scowl as he increased his speed and strove to regain his lost lead.

But Trevor held what he had taken, took his pace from Taylor, and with never a look to right or left, kept doggedly at the other's heels. The fourth lap started in a veritable pandemonium. Taylor was now but a scant ten

yards in the lead, and those who saw Trevor's calm, intent gaze fastened upon the other boy's shoulders realized that, barring a mishap such as had fallen to the lot of Kernan, he would, if he did not actually win, at least finish so close behind Taylor as to make the race one of the closest ever witnessed at Hillton, indoors or out.

This time Taylor was on the lookout, and when Trevor spurted was ready for him and so held his advantage. Trevor was well satisfied, for he had no wish to pass Taylor at that time, but only to tire and worry him. His spurt lasted until the line was again crossed. And now Taylor took the initiative and increased his speed, for, as Trevor had expected, the short spurts had made him nervous. But shake off his pursuer he could not, and with the lap half run but five yards lay between the two.

"He's a silly chump!" shouted Todd angrily, glaring across at the speeding senior runner. "Why doesn't he keep that for the last lap; can't he see he's begun to spurt too early?"

"I have an idea that Trevor Nesbitt's got him scared," answered Dick.

"You just bet he has; he's worried to death!" This from Williams, who was scowling blackly. "He deserves to lose it."

"And Nesbitt deserves to win it," said Dick.

"Humph! You seem to have changed your tune!" Dick accepted the gibe good-naturedly.

"I have; I think Nesbitt's the headiest youngster I've seen in a long while, and as for Taylor——"

The bell clanged loudly, announcing the beginning of the last lap, and every fellow in the balcony was on his feet in the instant. As he took the first turn Taylor glanced hurriedly back and met the unwavering and, as it seemed to him, relentless stare of Trevor, and putting every effort into his work again increased his pace. Everybody was shouting now, but as the two runners passed under the seniors' balcony one voice sounded more loudly than all:

"Good work, Nesbitt!"

And Trevor heard it and recognized Dick Hope's voice, and for an instant a smile crossed his face. Then the second incline was under his feet, and he had to use care lest he trip. But he got safely over, and now the time for his final effort had come. Into the back-stretch he sped, and the watchers held their breath, for foot by foot the lost ground was being eaten up by his flying feet. Then a burst of applause shook the rafters and Taylor, running despairingly, heard the other lad's feet at his side, strove to goad his wearied limbs into faster strides, and found with dismay at his heart that he had reached his limit.

At the third corner Trevor with a final effort leaped into the lead, hugging the inside of the track. At the last corner he was a yard to the good, and from there down to the finish line, where Kernan and Chalmers and Johnston leaped frantically about the floor, he held his vantage, and

so toppled over into eager, outspread arms, aching, breathless, and weak, but winner of the race. And as he stretched himself gratefully on the mattress he heard the timekeeper announce:

"Last quarter, fifty-seven and one fifth; the mile, three forty-eight and two fifths."

When Trevor reached his room he found Dick seated in front of the fire, a Latin text-book face downward in his lap, his arms over his head, and his eyes closed. The fire was almost out, and the room was chilly. Trevor as silently as possible placed another log in the grate, and, disappearing into the bedroom, came out again with his dressing-gown, which after a moment's hesitation he spread over the sleeper's knees. Then he doffed his coat and cap, and standing by the fireplace held his chilled hands to the blaze and looked down at Dick. And as he looked he fell to wondering why it was that he and his roommate got on together so badly. It was not *his* fault, he told himself; he had tried every way he knew to thaw Dick's indifference. It was now ten days since the winter term had commenced, and the two boys were as much strangers to each other as they had been after Trevor's burst of confidence on their first night together. Trevor often regretted that confidence; he sometimes thought that he had bored Dick with his family photographs and history, and remembered with a flush that his roommate had never responded in like manner. Of course, his cheekiness on the stage-coach dur-

ing that unfortunate drive had been the primary cause of Dick's dislike; and Trevor couldn't blame the latter for taking umbrage; only—well, he had apologized and explained, and it seemed that the other ought to be willing to forgive. It was not that Dick was nasty; he treated Trevor with good-humored politeness; fact was, Trevor reflected dubiously, Dick was altogether too polite; his politeness was of the sort which he imagined a judge might display toward the prisoner in the dock. He wished that Dick would throw a boot at him so that they could have it out and come to an understanding.

Dick moved restlessly and opened his eyes. His gaze encountered Trevor's and he smiled sleepily and stretched himself. Then he sat up and looked about him perplexedly.

"Well, if I didn't go to sleep!" he said. "What time is it?"

Trevor glanced at the battered alarm-clock on the table. "Ten minutes of twelve," he answered.

Dick yawned and suddenly spied the dressing-gown. He pulled it toward him and looked at it in astonishment.

"What——?"

Trevor flushed as he answered hurriedly: "It was so bally chilly here when I came in, you know; and I thought that maybe you'd catch cold. So I threw that over you. Just pitch it on the floor there."

"Thanks," said Dick. "I expect it was chilly. I was going to put another stick on the fire, and while I was

thinking about it I suppose I fell asleep. It's pretty late, isn't it? Well, to-morrow's Sunday."

He arose and the two began to prepare for bed. There was something in Dick's tone and manner quite friendly, and Trevor was puzzled.

"That was a great race you ran, Nesbitt," said the former presently.

"The last one wasn't so bad," answered Trevor.

"Bad! It was fine!" replied Dick warmly. "It was the best bit of head-work I've seen on a track. And I was glad you beat Taylor, even if it did mean the loss of the race to the seniors. But I rather think I liked the first race better."

"Well, of course you would," said Trevor. "Earle's a friend of yours; and he ran a good race. I—I didn't much mind his beating; he seems like a jolly good sort of a chap."

"He is a good chap; and I know it pleased him like anything to win that race, because his father and mother were there, you see."

"Yes."

"It would have been too bad if he'd lost it, wouldn't it?" Dick was smiling rather queerly, Trevor thought.

"I suppose it would," he answered.

"Yes; and so you gave it to him."

"What—what do you mean?" stammered Trevor, very red and uncomfortable.

"Why," laughed Dick, "just what I said. You're not

going to deny that you slowed down and let him win, are you?"

For a long moment Trevor was very busy with his nightshirt, which suddenly exhibited an unwonted dislike to going on. Then:

"I fancy there's no use denying it," he muttered from the folds of the mutinous garment.

"Not a bit," answered Dick smilingly.

"You see," explained Trevor presently, "Earle had set his heart on winning, and it didn't mean anything to me, you know; I hadn't any relatives looking on; and then his mother was so—so jolly nice about it, and his father, and—and all, that I just thought he might as well win. Doesn't it—don't you think it was all right?"

"Well, it wasn't exactly fair, you know; but I guess it was something even better," answered Dick.

"Do you think Earle suspected anything?"

"I'm sure I don't know; I didn't see him. But Williams and Todd, who were sitting with me, thought it was a straight race, and so I guess Earle thought so too."

Later, when the lights were out and the two were in bed, Dick broke the silence.

"Are you awake, Nesbitt?"

"Yes," came the reply from across the darkness.

"I've been thinking I'd take a good, long walk tomorrow after church; up the river toward Port Wallace. Like to go along?"

"I should say so!" was the hearty reply.

"All right, I wish you would. Good-night."

"Good-night," answered Trevor. Then, as he burrowed his head contentedly in the pillow, he thought: "I fancy it's all right now, and he won't have to throw that boot after all!"

CHAPTER VIII

CANDIDATES FOR THE CREW

Roy Taylor's work was apparent when on the following Tuesday afternoon the candidates for the crew reported in the rowing-room at the gymnasium. Dick counted the assemblage over twice, but could make no more than nineteen, a sorry showing compared with last year; twenty men —including himself—from which to select two eights! But he was careful to let none of the discontent that he felt appear on his face.

"There aren't very many of us, fellows," he said cheerfully, "but I guess we all mean business, and that's a good deal."

Professor Beck entered at that moment, paused to remove his rubbers, and then surveyed the candidates through his glasses.

"Well, boys, are you all here?" His gaze traveled around the room. "But I see that you're not. Four o'clock was the hour, wasn't it, Hope?"

"Yes, sir; and it's now a quarter after. I guess they're all here that are coming."

"Bless me, this won't do! How many—four, six, ten,

sixteen, twenty? Twenty men for two crews. What do you fellows think we're going to race with this year, pair-oars?"

The candidates, perched about the room on window-sills and radiators, smiled, but were careful not to laugh aloud, since it was evident that the professor was thoroughly vexed.

"Hope, you'll have to go among the fellows and work up some interest in the crews; and Taylor, you're an old-crew man, you do the same; and the rest of you, too, I want you all to talk rowing, and next week I want as many more candidates on hand. This is perfect poppycock! Twenty men, indeed! Well, that's all I've got to say to you; now listen to Captain Hope." And the professor withdrew to a window, where he polished his glasses vigorously and made a number of the new candidates very nervous by the critical way in which he studied them.

"I'd like every fellow's name before he leaves," said Dick. "And I want to see every one here promptly at three o'clock next Wednesday afternoon. Meanwhile those of you who haven't been examined for crew work will please attend to it. Have you set any special days, professor?"

"Yes, to-morrow and Saturday afternoons," answered the latter, "between four and six."

"You new fellows must understand that permits to take part in baseball and track games won't answer for rowing,

so please see Mr. Beck to-morrow if possible; if not, on Saturday. I hope that you'll do as Mr. Beck has requested; I mean try and work up more of an interest in rowing; every fellow ought to be able to bring at least one other fellow with him next Wednesday. We've got a hard proposition before us this spring, but it's by no means a hopeless one. We've beaten St. Eustace on the river before—often—and we can do it again; but it means lots of hard work, and any fellow that's afraid of work might as well pull out now, for we can't have any shirking. Last spring there was a good deal of trouble at the first of the season because the candidates—some of them, that is—tried to get out of preliminary work. That won't do; the work on the weights at the beginning of the season is really important, and it's got to be faced; and I tell you now that any fellow who won't go through with it honestly isn't wanted. But I don't believe there are any of that sort here to-day, and I hope there won't be next Wednesday. I guess that's all I have to say. I hope every fellow will bear in mind the fact that in trying for the crew he is not only bettering his own physical condition and health, but standing by the school; he can't do more for the honor of Hillton than by honest, sincere work on the crews. And it doesn't make any difference whether he makes the varsity boat or the second; in either case he's doing his best, doing his duty; for the fellow that rows with the second eight is helping to turn out a winning crew almost as much as

though he rowed in the race with St. Eustace. I hope we'll all pull together this year and that there won't be any discord. I'll do my level best, and I'll trust you fellows to do yours; and if that is so I defy St. Eustace or any one else to beat us!"

The audience showed its approval of these sentiments by clapping, Taylor perhaps the loudest of all, and Dick, somewhat red in the face from his effort, smiled, and drawing a tablet from his pocket, proceeded to take the fellows' names. Professor Beck settled his glasses again on his nose and approached a youth who during the proceedings had been perched comfortably on the top of a radiator, but who, having secured the entry of his name in the list of candidates, was now examining with interest the working of one of the rowing machines.

"You're Nesbitt, aren't you?" asked the professor.

"Yes, sir."

"Ever rowed any, Nesbitt?"

"Yes, as a youngster"—here the professor smiled slightly—"I used to paddle a bit; that was in England."

"Ah, yes; I recollect you now. You won the last quarter in the relay race the other night; that was well run, my boy, although you're rather too heavy for fast work. How was your wind when you finished?"

"It was rather short; the spurts tuckered me quite a bit."

"Yes, I imagine you could get rid of eight pounds or

so to good advantage. You'd better come and see me tomorrow and take your examination, so that I can put you to work on the weights as soon as possible. I'm glad you're going to try for the crew; you look as though you were made for a rowing man." He nodded smilingly and moved away, and Trevor, assuming an appearance of unconcern, while secretly much flattered by the professor's attention, joined Dick, who had finished his list and was conversing with Roy Taylor and Crocker, a large, heavily built youth who had rowed at Number 6 in the second eight the preceding year. Taylor was speaking when Trevor approached.

"Why, last winter over forty fellows turned out, and now look at 'em! Great Scott! There's no use *trying* to get a decent crew out of twenty men!"

Dick frowned, and Crocker offered a suggestion:

"Look here, the Hilltonian comes out in less than a week; what's the matter with getting Singer to write a ripping editorial about the necessity for more candidates, and—and 'asking the support of the entire student body,' and all that sort of stuff? Maybe there's still time; I'm blamed if I know when the paper goes to press."

"That's a good idea, Bob," answered Dick. "And I'll see Singer this evening. And meanwhile you fellows do what you can; you ought to be able to drum up lots of fellows, Taylor; you know plenty of them, and what you say has weight."

"Well, I'll do what I can, Hope, of course, but there doesn't seem to be the usual interest in rowing this year."

"I know; we've got to awaken interest. I'll see you the last of the week and we'll have another council of war. Going back to the room, Nesbitt?"

On their way across the Yard, which between the walks was a waste of heavily crusted snow upon which the afternoon sunlight flashed dazzlingly, the two boys were silent—Dick with the little creases in his forehead very deep, and Trevor kicking at the ice in a manner which suggested annoyance. When the dormitory was reached Trevor stopped and let go savagely at a small cake of ice, which, as it was securely frozen to the granite step, only resulted in an unpleasant jar to his foot. But the jar seemed to loosen his tongue, for he turned quickly to Dick as they passed into the building, and asked explosively:

"Is that chap Taylor all right?"

"Why? Have you heard anything?" asked Dick.

"No; only—only he looks as though he didn't much like you, Hope; and then he talks so sick!"

"Sick?"

"Yes; I mean he talks as though he didn't *want* the crew to be a success; haven't you noticed it?"

"The trouble with Roy Taylor," answered the other gravely as they passed into Number 16, "is that he hates to have any one else win out at anything. He has a mighty high opinion of Roy Taylor, you know. He wanted to be

captain, and I don't think he has ever forgiven me for beating him; but I guess he'll come round in the end and do his best for the crew."

Trevor didn't look impressed with this last remark. He studied the flames awhile thoughtfully as he held his hands up to the warmth. Then:

"I see. I don't fancy, then, he loves me much after the way I beat him Saturday night, eh?"

"I guess not," answered Dick laughingly. "I 'fancy' we're both down in his black book."

"Yes." Trevor turned away and rummaged among the *débris* of the study table. "Seen my algebra? Never mind, here it is." He drew a chair up before the fireplace and opened the book, only to lay it down again and deliver himself forcibly of the following declaration:

"Taylor may be as waxy with me as he likes, Hope, but he's got to understand that if he interferes with this crew business there's a plaguy lot of trouble ahead for him!"

"And for me, too," thought Dick, as he gazed despondently at the slim list of candidates.

CHAPTER IX

THE HOCKEY MATCH

The balance of the week was a busy time for Dick. His usual hour of study before supper was dropped, and he spent that time with every other spare moment in trying to recruit candidates for the crews. He buttonholed boys in classroom and even in chapel, pursued them across the frozen Yard, waylaid them in the corridors, and bearded them in their dens; and all with small success. Those who displayed a willingness to go in for rowing were almost invariably younger fellows whose ambitions were better developed than their muscles. Those whom Dick longed to secure had an excuse for every inducement he could set forth. The seniors pleaded lessons; the upper middle fellows were going in for baseball, cricket, anything save rowing; the lower class boys were unpromising to a degree; and when Saturday came he found that out of a possible ten recruits the most promising was a long-legged, pasty-faced youth who had been dropped from the hockey team and whose desperate desire to distinguish himself in some manner was alone accountable for his complaisance.

That Taylor and Crocker and some of the other candi-

dates had been busy was evident from the first—Taylor especially, Dick told himself bitterly.

"Try for the crew?" said one senior whom Dick approached, "why, Roy Taylor was speaking to me about it, and I promised him I'd think it over. But I don't see how I can, Hope; you know yourself how beastly hard the studies are this term; I'm an awful duffer at mathematics, and German, too; and then as for physics—well, really I can't see how I'm ever going to pass." And when Dick pointed out modestly enough that he (Dick) had the same studies and was going in for rowing, and expected to graduate notwithstanding, the other waived the argument aside carelessly: "Oh, *you*, Hope! You're different; you're one of those lucky beggars that never have any trouble with lessons. Why, if I was like you I wouldn't hesitate an instant; I'd say put me down for the crew right away. But as it is—— By the way, is it true that you've only got twenty candidates?"

"Who told you that?" asked Dick.

"Taylor, I think. That isn't very many, is it? I don't see how you'll get a crew out of that."

"Nor do I," muttered Dick, as he turn away discouraged.

When Saturday came, bringing Carl Gray at two o'clock with the suggestion that Dick join him and witness the hockey match with St. Eustace, the latter concluded that he had earned a vacation, and so donned his warmest

sweater and jacket and allowed himself to be torn away from the subject of candidates. As the two lads crossed the yard toward the steps that led down to the river by the boat-house they encountered Trevor, who, when their destination was made known to him, turned about and joined them. It was a bitterly cold day, and the wind, sweeping down the broad river, nipped ears and noses smartly. Despite this, however, a fair-sized audience had assembled on the ice near the landing, where a rink had been marked out, and were either circling about on skates or tramping to and fro to keep warm.

"Haven't begun yet," said Carl Gray as they reached the head of the steps. "Looks as though they were having a debate instead of a hockey match."

As they reached the ice they saw that the captain of the Hillton team, an upper middle youth named Grove, was in earnest conversation with a St. Eustace player —apparently the captain of the opposing team—while a circle of interested boys surrounded them. As the three approached the gathering broke up, and Grove, spying Dick, came toward him looking angry and indignant.

"Say, Hope, what do you think? St. Eustace wants to play that big dub over there; see him? The fellow with the white sweater. Why, he's twenty-two if he's a day! And he isn't a St. Eustace fellow at all; Brown knows him. He lives at Marshall and works in a mill or something. I've

told French that we wouldn't play if they put him on. Don't you think that's right?"

"He does look rather big and aged for a St. Eustace chap," replied Dick with a grin. "And of course if you're certain he's an outsider you're right not to give in. What does the St. Eustace captain say?"

"Oh, he says the fellow's a day scholar; that he's only eighteen; and that they haven't brought any subs, and that if Billings—that's the mucker's name—if Billings can't play there won't be any game."

"Queer thing to come all the way up here without any subs," said Carl. "But I tell you what you can do, Grove; offer to lend them a man. What does Billings play?"

"Forward," grumbled Grove. "We might do that. Who could we give them?"

"You'd have to give them a good player," said Dick.

"I suppose so. Well, there's Perry over there."

"No, you don't," laughed Dick. "I know Perry; I talked with him the other day; he's the fellow you dropped from the team last week." Grove looked sheepish.

"Well, what business have they got trying such tricks?" he muttered in extenuation. "I guess I'll offer them Jenkins; he really is a good player, Hope; you know that yourself; I'll put Dennison in his place. And if I do they'll likely beat us."

"Let 'em. Go ahead and make the offer."

Grove sped away and promptly returned with the announcement that St. Eustace had agreed. "But we want another goal umpire. Will you act, Hope?" Dick would, and was led away. The rink was cleared of spectators, and Trevor and Carl found places of observation on the sideline. The opposing teams took their places. The Hillton players wore crimson sweaters and stockings; before the St. Eustace goal were six blue-clad youths and one crimson, the latter being Jenkins, the borrowed forward. Grove and French, the St. Eustace captain, faced the puck, the referee cried "Play!" and the game was on.

It proved a brilliant game, despite the high wind that seriously handicapped the side having the down-river goal. Hillton's playing in the first half was quick and plucky, and for the first ten of the twenty minutes St. Eustace's goal was almost constantly in danger. But try after try was foiled by the brilliant work of the Blue's goal-tend, who time and again won the applause of the shivering audience. Then St. Eustace secured the puck and forced the playing, and for a few minutes Hillton seemed to be taken off her feet. A beautifully lifted stroke finally sent the puck skimming through Hillton's goal, and the St. Eustace players waved their sticks in delight. Hillton braced when play began again, and was dribbling the disk threateningly toward the Blue's goal when time was called.

"I wish I had Jenkins back," complained Grove as, bundled in his blanket, he joined Trevor and Carl. "He

played better than any fellow on our team—or theirs either, for that matter."

"Who shot that goal?" asked Carl.

"French; it was a dandy. Our little friend Billings yonder looks mad, doesn't he?"

The displaced player had joined the St. Eustace team, and was evidently bemoaning his fate. He was a tall, freckle-faced youth who, as Grove had said, appeared every day of twenty-one or two. He had a slouchy stoop to his shoulders, but nevertheless looked dangerous as a hockey player. Dick joined the other three lads.

"I just heard your freckled-faced friend explaining why it is you'll never make a good player, Grove," he announced. "He says you don't get low enough; says he could put you off your feet easily."

"He does, eh?" grunted Grove. "I wish we'd let him play; I'd put him off *his* feet, the big mucker!"

"There, there, keep your sweet little temper," laughed Dick. "And come on; time's up." The crowd took up its position along the boundary lines again, and again the puck was put in play. Hillton had good luck at the start. Superb team work on the part of the crimson-clad forwards took the disk down to within striking distance of their opponents' goal, and a quick drive by Grove sent it through. St. Eustace's goal-tend looked surprised and vexed, and the audience cheered delightedly. Four minutes later the same proceeding was repeated, and after two ineffectual tries the

puck slid through between the goal-tend's skates just where he apparently didn't expect it to go. That was Dennison's score, and again the onlookers voiced their pleasure. The score was now two to one in Hillton's favor, and St. Eustace shook herself together and played hard. For ten minutes neither side scored. Then, by a brilliant rush down the side of the rink, Jenkins, the borrowed player, fooled the Hillton cover-point, and, aided by French, ran past point and lifted the disk through between the Hillton posts—a difficult shot that won him lots of applause. The score was now tied, with a scant five minutes of play left.

Trevor and Carl, deeply intent on the game, suddenly had their attention diverted by a voice from near at hand. "What do you think of that, now? What do those fellers in red think they're playing, billiards? O-oh, ain't that awful!" It was the deposed St. Eustace forward, Billings, who was celebrating the Blue's recent goal, and revenging himself on his enemies by ridiculing the home players. Carl glared, and the throng surrounding him looked hostile to a boy.

"He ought to have sense enough to keep his mouth shut," said Carl.

"Yes, but he's got pluck to talk that way in this crowd," replied Trevor with a grin.

"Not a bit; he knows he's safe enough. It isn't likely that fifty or sixty fellows would jump on one lone chap, no matter how cheeky he was."

The ridicule continued, but after the first recognition of the affront the throng of Hilltonians tacitly ignored the freckle-faced youth; indeed, in another minute his existence was forgotten, for with but a couple of minutes to play St. Eustace's point secured the puck, and with a fine stroke sent it sailing down the rink into Hillton territory, where a misplay on the part of the Crimson's cover-point gave Jenkins his opportunity, and the next instant Hillton's goal was besieged. A stroke at close quarters was blocked, and the disk skimmed toward the side of the rink, only to be again recovered and dribbled forward until it was once more in the possession of the redoubtable Jenkins. There was a rush by Grove and another Hillton forward, the sound of clashing sticks, and then out from the *mêlée* like a shot from a cannon sped the puck, straight for the goal and about two feet above the ice. The Hillton goal-tend leaped to the left and turned to receive the disk on his padded thigh. But he was too late. The puck struck him, but was only slightly deflected, and in another moment the St. Eustace sticks were waving high in air, and the goal-tend, crestfallen and dazed, was ruefully rubbing his hip. Hillton returned resolutely to the battle, and the puck was again faced, but time was called ere it was well out of the scrimmage, and the game was St. Eustace's by three goals to two. Trevor turned away in disappointment, and was confronted by the triumphant Billings, who was whirling his stick about his head and grinning provokingly.

"Oh, easy, easy! Those kids can't play hockey; they ought to be at home doing needlework." Carl muttered something uncomplimentary, and Trevor reddened as they pushed their way through the dissolving throng. Billings, spying Trevor as he approached, thrust himself in his path.

"Say, sonny, why don't you kids learn the game?"

Trevor strove to keep his temper and pass, but the Marshall youth laid a determining hand on his arm.

"You see, sonny, what you Hillton kids want to do is to learn how to skate, see? There ain't any use trying to play hockey until you can skate."

Trevor turned and smiled very sweetly.

"Perhaps you think you can skate?" he asked in a tone of polite inquiry.

"I have a hunch that way," replied Billings with a swagger.

"That's very nice," answered Trevor, "because you don't look as though you could, you know."

A circle of interested Hilltonians had already formed, and were grinning their appreciation. Billings appeared somewhat astounded for an instant. Then he thrust his jaw out aggressively, and asked angrily:

"Say, what's the matter with you, kid? Do you think you can teach me anything about skating?"

"Well, of course, I'm a month or two younger than you, you know"—here the crowd snickered impolitely—

"but I rather fancy that I can beat you by a few yards in a half-mile race. Would you care to try?"

For a moment Billings looked doubtful. Possibly he thought that he had unwittingly encountered the school's crack skater, and feared for the result. If he did the idea was dispelled by Trevor's next remark.

"They don't call me much of a skater here, you know; we have several fellows who can beat me without trouble, but they're all rather busy just at present, and so, if you don't mind putting up with something ordinary, I'll be glad to show you what I can about skating." The gentle patronage of Trevor's tones was beautiful, and the audience hugged itself gleefully. Billings laughed loudly and scornfully.

"You will, eh? Say, you're awfully nice, aren't you? Mama know you're out?" Trevor reddened but kept his temper.

"I fancy I could beat you by about twenty yards in a half mile," he said musingly.

That was the last straw, and Billings elbowed his way toward the boat-house landing.

"Get your skates on, sonny, and I'll show you what you don't know about skating."

"Where can I get a pair?" asked Trevor, addressing the fellows about him.

"Get Grove's; what size shoe do you wear?" asked Carl. "Five? They ought to fit; wait here and I'll get them." And he hurried off.

"Do you think you can beat him, 'Ighness?" asked one of the crowd.

"I fancy so; anyhow, I'll do my best." Carl returned with Groves skating-boots, to which were screwed a superb pair of hockey skates. Trevor tried them on, and found that they fitted perfectly. News of the proposed race had spread, and those who had started toward their rooms had returned, while the two hockey teams, having taken off their skates and donned their heavy clothing, also joined the throng. Billings swept up majestically, and Trevor, who had been trying his skates in short circles, joined him.

"Suppose you skate around Long Isle and back," suggested Grove; "that's about a half mile. We'll draw a mark here for the finish. I say, French, you might act as judge at the finish. Dick, you start them, will you?"

"Standing start?" asked Dick.

Trevor looked inquiringly at Billings. "Doesn't matter to me," growled that youth.

"All right. On your marks," said Dick. "You're to skate to the right, around Long Isle, and return here, crossing this line in this way from below. Is that satisfactory?"

Trevor nodded and felt for a hold with his rear blade, and Billings uttered another growl.

"On your marks!—Set!—*Go!*"

Away they sped, Billings slightly in the lead, having learned the science of quick starting from his hockey experience. They crossed the river diagonally, heading for

the down-stream end of the island, Billings bending low, hands clasped behind his back, in the approved style of American racers; Trevor more erect, arms swinging by his sides, and apparently putting forth much less effort than his competitor.

"Carl, can Nesbitt skate?" asked Dick somewhat anxiously. Carl shook his head.

"Don't ask me. I never met him until the other day. But he *can* skate; we can see that; the question is how well?"

"I hope he'll win, if only to shut that bragging mucker up. Hello, look there!"

Carl looked and uttered a groan of dismay. Long Isle, lying almost abreast of the boat landing and about two thirds way across the river, is in reality composed of not one, but two islands, the second, scarcely twenty yards long, being separated from the main expanse at its lower end by a scant two yards of ice-covered channel. This fact had been overlooked, and now the watchers saw, at first with surprise and then with annoyance, that the skaters had parted company. Billings had headed for the channel, while Trevor, holding to a close interpretation of the agreement, was making for the end of the smaller island. The next moment Billings was out of sight; another instant and Trevor too had disappeared.

"If Nesbitt can overcome that handicap he's a good one," muttered Dick.

"That's so," Carl assented. "It means a good fifty yards lost, I guess." Some of the boys had hurried across the ice to the island, and from a point of vantage near its northern end were to be seen waving their arms wildly. But the throng at the finish could gather no hint from their gestures as to the progress of the racers.

"Evidently a misunderstanding there," said French, the St. Eustace captain, approaching Grove. "Which is Long Isle?"

"Both of 'em," grunted Grove.

"Well, but——"

"Oh, it's all right, I guess; Billings wasn't supposed to know; it was my fault; I forgot about that plaguy little bunch of land beyond there. The fellow that crosses first wins," he added decisively. "What do you say, Hope?"

"That's right; Billings couldn't know that he was supposed to go around both islands."

"Very well," answered French, "but I'm sorry there was any misunderstanding. Your man may think that he might have won if it hadn't been for the mistake."

"He may win anyhow," said Dick dryly. "The race isn't over yet." French looked to see if Dick was joking, but finding no signs of levity, smiled politely and deprecatingly, and moved off. The next moment the boys on the island left their places and came scrambling back across the ice, and then a skater came into view around the up-river end of the island and headed for the finish.

"It's Billings," said Dick in disappointed tones. But ere the words were out of his mouth a second form sped into sight, and a cheer went up from the watchers. Trevor was apparently but a half dozen yards behind, and, although as the racers were coming directly toward the group it was impossible to be certain on that point, seemed to be gaining at every stride.

Carl slapped Dick boisterously on the shoulder and then hugged him ecstatically. "Can 'Is 'Ighness skate, Dick? *Can he skate?*"

"Can he!" howled Dick. "Look, he's even with him; he's—by Jupiter, Carl, he's ahead of him!"

He was; and not only ahead now, but leading by a good three yards. Every voice was raised in shouts of encouragement, and cries of "Hurry up, Billings!" "Come on, Nesbitt!" "You can beat him! Brace up!" "Bully for Hillton!" broke into the frosty air as the two racers, bearing down swiftly, almost silently, on the finish line, sped nearer and nearer.

Twenty yards away Trevor threw a fleeting glance over his shoulder at his straining rival, and then, suddenly bending lower over the leaden-hued surface, fairly left the other standing and shot through the lane in the crowd and over the line a winner by ten long yards!

And how Hillton howled!

"Even old 'Turkey' couldn't beat that!" exulted Carl.

Trevor swung about near shore and skated leisurely

A winner by ten yards.

back to where Billings, red-faced and panting, was explaining to French and the rest of the St. Eustace team how it happened. But his friends looked utterly bored at his narrative, and turned away one by one toward the landing steps. Trevor came to a stop a yard in front of the tall, freckle-faced youth, who paused in his explanation and regarded him angrily. The crowd hushed its chatter in delighted anticipation. Trevor thrust his hands under his sweater and regarded Billings with a wealth of genial condescension.

"Any time you'd like to learn more about skating," he remarked sweetly, "come up. I'm always at leisure Saturday afternoons."

Then he nodded amiably and skated away ere the outraged Billings could summon his scattered wits to the rescue of his equally scattered dignity.

CHAPTER X

BUYING AN ICE-YACHT

"An ice-yacht," observed Carl learnedly, "is the nearest approach at the present age to a flying-machine."

"And I never cared a bit about flying," answered Dick, without enthusiasm.

The two, with Trevor and Stewart Earle, were gathered close about the fireplace in Number 16 Masters. Two good hickory logs were crackling merrily, and, although owing to the fact that the steam-heating apparatus was evidently on a strike and their backs were constantly caressed by shivers, their knees and faces were radiantly warm; and that was sufficient comfort. A huge paper bag was perched on the table, and the quartet were busily munching big, rosy apples, while close to the ashes four more were sizzling and sputtering in the heat. They had started out with the intention of having a feast of roasted apples, but had found that the roasting process was too slow to meet the demands of their appetites, and so were keeping down the pangs of starvation in the interims by consuming the fruit as Nature had meant they should.

"An ice-yacht," continued Carl, undismayed, "can be

put together very easily and cheaply. All you have to have is four pieces of timber and——"

"Look here, Carl," interrupted Dick impolitely, "the last thing you made was a toboggan, and it cost about nine dollars before you were through with it, and you could have bought a *good* one for five." Stewart giggled and Carl grinned good-naturedly.

"Well, let's buy one, then," he replied. "Let's go down to Euston Point and see the one this fellow advertises."

"How much do they cost?" asked Trevor.

"Oh, we could get a second-hand one for fifteen dollars, easy; maybe less. That would be only four dollars apiece, if we all went in. And we could have the biggest kind of fun! Why, some ice-yachts go as fast as ninety miles an hour!"

"Oh, get out!"

"They do; don't they, Stew?'

"Easy," answered Stewart gravely. "I've seen lots of them do it. I owned one myself once that could go a hundred and thirty-seven miles in——"

"Shut up, you idiot!" growled Carl. "What do you say, fellows; shall we see if we can get the boat? Think how jolly grouchy the other chaps would be to see us skipping around and——"

"And breaking our necks," suggested Trevor.

"Nothing of the sort! Why, it's not dangerous at all;

any one that knows anything about sailing a yacht can manage an ice-boat."

"Well, who knows anything about sailing among this crowd? Do you, Trevor?"

Trevor shook his head.

"Not a thing."

"*I* do, of course," interrupted Carl.

"Well," said Stewart, "as far as I'm concerned I think I'd rather have some one else than you do it, Carl."

"Oh, quit fooling; I'm in earnest. Suppose we go to Euston Point next Saturday and see what's doing?"

"But, look here," said Dick, "how do you know Faculty will let us sail the thing if we get it?"

"Why shouldn't they? They allow skating; ice-yachting's just skating—with a difference. Besides, as long as there's no rule against it we have a right to do it."

This argument was incontrovertible, and it was agreed that the four should journey to the near-by village of Euston Point the following Saturday morning. And then Stewart suddenly discovered that the apples on the hearth had been done for some time, and in the business that followed the subject of ice-yachting was forgotten.

When Dick and Trevor returned from supper that evening they found a fresh, inky-smelling number of The Hilltonian awaiting them in the letter-box. Dick hurried to the room with it and spread it out under the light on the table. Yes, Singer had been as good as his word; the

leading editorial was headed The Rowing Situation, and was quite in Singer's best style.

"My!" ejaculated Trevor, who had been reading the article over Dick's shoulder, "that's spiffin!"

"It sounds rather well, doesn't it?" asked Dick, highly gratified by the effusion. "And you'd think it would bring some of the fellows round, eh?"

"Bound to; you'll find slathers of them in the gym to-morrow afternoon," replied Trevor confidently. "Read it out loud, Hope."

And Dick did so and Trevor listened admiringly and interpolated an applauding "Hear, hear!" at intervals, and Dick went to bed very hopeful of the morrow.

But when at three o'clock the folowing afternoon he repaired to the rowing-room his heart sank. Aside from the original nineteen candidates, but the veriest handful were present. Dick counted them grimly; there were fourteen of them, and for the most part they not only looked but really were sadly out of their element. A small junior of perhaps fourteen tried to hide himself in a corner, but Dick routed him out mercilessly and asked him cruelly if he was a candidate for coxswain.

"Yes—no—that is, I don't know," was the breathless reply. Dick turned away and encountered the mocking gaze of Taylor, who, when Dick's eyes were turned upon him, smoothed his features into an expression of respectful concern and walked forward.

"What an outfit, eh?" he asked softly. But Dick was resolved that the other should not have the satisfaction of knowing his disappointment. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled carelessly.

"Well, they don't look brilliant; a bit light on an average; but I dare say we'll be able to find some good material in the lot." At that moment Professor Beck entered. After a slow and careful glance up and down the long room he looked fleetingly at Dick, frowned, and turned away. But he made no remarks upon the showing of candidates save once.

"Mr. Kirk will coach the crews again this year," he announced, "and will be with you every Saturday afternoon until the river opens, when, as last year, he will come up to Hillton and stay with you until the race. I expect he will make his first visit a week from next Saturday, and I'm sure"—he glanced blandly over the audience—"I'm sure he will be greatly pleased with the material he will find."

Something approaching a shudder passed over the throng, and Dick turned aside to hide a grim smile. Then the first batch of candidates trooped off to the locker room to don gymnasium attire, and the new recruits were registered, instructed to report for examination the following afternoon, and dismissed looking heartily relieved. When the last one had gone Professor Beck heaved a sigh and turned to Dick.

"Hope, are you certain there was no mistake made? You're sure you didn't issue a call for candidates for a tiddledy-winks team?" Dick smiled dismally.

"No, there's no such luck. We've got thirty-four fellows, of which a possible two dozen are rowing material."

"Hum; I think we shall be able to turn out an excellent second eight, but as for a varsity crew—do you happen to have an idea as to where we are going to get that, Hope?"

"No, sir, I haven't," replied Dick miserably. Professor Beck polished his glasses thoughtfully for a minute and studied the wintry landscape through the high window. Then he smiled, settled the shining lenses again on his nose, and turned toward the door.

"We'll have to use our wits, Hope. Above all, don't allow yourself to become discouraged. We still have a couple of weeks before us, and—well, I guess we can accomplish something in that time. Are you ready?"

Together they passed out onto the floor and in a few minutes the first squad of crew candidates had begun their training. Of the twenty, two had rowed in the varsity boat of the preceding year, four had rowed with the second eight, three had trained as substitutes, and the balance, eleven candidates, represented new and inexperienced material as far as shell-rowing was concerned. Well-nigh all were what Trevor would have termed "wetbobs," and had paddled about in tubs or perhaps rowed now and then in a pair-oar. Professor Beck and Dick were busy for the

half hour that constituted the first day's exercising. Generally speaking, each candidate required a different work from his neighbors. In Brown the forearm muscles were undeveloped; in Smith the chest muscles had been neglected; in Jones the back was as unbending as a two-inch plank, while Robinson, perchance, was in a state of general flabbiness. The professor viewed attentively the work of each boy, altered the exercise here, stopped it there, increased it elsewhere, while Dick stood beside him, listening to his instructions and memorizing, as pointed out to him, the needs of the different ones. After awhile the fellows were sent to the track for the briefest of trots, and so, having stood for an instant under a shower-bath, dressed, and went their ways full-fledged crew candidates, with an inalienable right to look down condescendingly upon their schoolmates, to cut Friday night lectures, and comport themselves generally in the manner of coming heroes.

And Dick, with Trevor at his side, went back to his room for an hour of study before supper, not overjoyful, but yet somewhat comforted by the professor's hopefulness and by the fact that real work had at last commenced.

On Friday night Professor Beck announced to Dick that the fourteen newer candidates had been examined, and in five instances found wanting. "Of those that remain," said the professor, "two look like good men; as for the rest——" He shrugged his shoulders eloquently. "But we can tell better in a week or two. Meanwhile, we must keep

up the recruiting. I have my eye on an upper middle boy, and I think I'll have him hooked in a day or two. If we can secure say another half dozen good men I think we can pull out all right."

The next morning—it being a bright and sunny Saturday toward the last of January—Dick, Trevor, Carl, and Stewart boarded the train and traveled to Euston Point, but a few miles distant, where they called on the man whose advertisement Carl had read in a local paper, and by him were conducted to a loft by the river, where a dilapidated-looking triangle of timbers and bolts—which its owner declared loudly was the fastest cat-rigged yacht on the Hudson—was shown to them. The bargain was soon closed, Carl conducting the negotiations and talking learnedly of runner planks, center timbers, and stays. The boat was to be supplied with a new rudder-post, a new sail and rigging, the runners were to be reground, and the whole was to be delivered at the boat landing at Hillton Academy four days from that date for the munificent sum of seventeen dollars and seventy-five cents. Carl was elated.

"We've saved two dollars and a quarter," he declared.

"I don't see how," objected Dick. "You told us last week that we could get the thing for fifteen dollars."

"I know I did; that's what I thought. But you heard him ask twenty at first, didn't you? Well, and I jewed him down to seventeen seventy-five. Isn't that two and a quarter saved?"

Dick had to acknowledge that it was, and Carl insisted on celebrating his successful financiering by treating to very nasty hot soda at the town's only drug store. And so to Carl's business acumen may be traced the series of events that led shortly to Trevor's disgrace.

Their way to the station took them past the open door of a livery stable. When they were abreast of it something round and white shot out, rolled over and over down the little incline, and brought up at Trevor's feet. It proved to be a young puppy, which, when it stopped rolling, found its four unsteady feet, barked joyously, and tried to gnaw the buttons from Trevor's trouser cuffs. But he was instantly seized upon and elevated in Trevor's arms for the inspection of the others.

"Isn't he a little beauty?" cried Trevor.

"Yes; what is he, a fox terrier?" asked Stewart, allowing the squirming and delighted puppy to chew his gloved fingers to its heart's content.

"Fox terrier!" replied Trevor scathingly. "Of course not; it's a bull. Look at that nose!"

"I am looking at it," answered Dick. "Nice and ugly, isn't it? What makes it so pink?"

"That's the way it ought to be," answered Trevor with fine disdain for his friend's ignorance. "I wonder who it belongs to?"

"Belongs right here, sir!" The boys glanced around and found a colored stableman observing them smilingly

from the doorway. Trevor placed the puppy upon the ground, where it at once relapsed into a state of loud and poignant grief, leaping with snowy feet against his stockings, and crying vehemently to be again taken up. Trevor patted it, whereupon its grief gave place to uncontrollable delight; it stood on its hind legs, buried its short nose in a small snow-bank, and attempted to take the boy's entire hand into its pink mouth, and all within the instant.

"It's the liveliest pup I ever saw," said Carl.

"That's a fine dog, sir," said the owner. "His mother took a first and two second prizes at the dog show last week, and his father's got lots of 'em. Yes, siree, he's a mighty fine dog, he is."

"Come on," said Dick, "we'll lose the train if we're not careful."

But Trevor paid no heed. He was looking intently at the puppy, which, with the boy's left thumb between his teeth, was radiantly happy.

"He's got a pedigree as long as yer arm," continued the stableman.

"Has he?" muttered Trevor.

"He can be registered ter-morrer, he can; he's blue-blooded right through, he is."

"Is he?" said Trevor. The puppy was now on its back, legs limply aloft, and Trevor was thoughtfully rubbing a pink-and-white stomach.

"Was you wanting to buy a dog, sir?"

"N-no, I think not," answered Trevor.

"Say, come on, Nesbitt, or we'll be late," cried Carl.

The stableman glanced over his shoulder. "Lots of time, gentlemen; train ain't due for twelve minutes yet." Then, addressing Trevor, "I had four of them and sold 'em all 'cept this one; an' he's the best of the lot; an' cheap, too —dirt cheap."

"How much?" asked Trevor with elaborate carelessness.

"You can have him for five dollars."

"Phew!" said Stewart.

"Give you fifty cents," said Carl. The stableman turned indignantly.

"I reckon you don't know much about what bulldogs is worth," he said. "This gentleman here knows that that ain't too much for a puppy as fine as that one; don't you, sir?"

"I dare say he's worth that much," answered Trevor, "but I couldn't pay it."

"What would you do with it if you had it?" asked Dick.

"Now, look here; I'll tell you what I'll do, sir," said the stableman. "You can have him for three dollars and a half. And that's mighty cheap, that is."

Trevor looked longingly at the puppy, who was now for the moment quiescent, and who was gazing up into Trevor's face as though breathlessly awaiting his verdict.

"I—I'll give you a dollar to-day and pay you the rest next Saturday," he said finally.

"You one of the Hillton young gentlemen?" asked the stableman.

"Yes."

"Well, you can take him along. What's your name?"

Trevor gave it amid the expostulations of his friends, who asked wonderingly where he expected to keep his new possession, how long he thought Faculty would let him have it, and how he was going to get it home. To all of which Trevor made no reply. Paying the man the first instalment of the money, he seized upon the delighted puppy and strode off, fearful lest the former owner should regret the bargain and change his mind.

"Well, of all things!" ejaculated Dick. "Where in thunder will you keep him?"

"Don't you worry," answered Trevor. "I'll find a place."

"What's troubling me," complained Carl, "is how you're going to pay your four dollars and forty-four cents toward the yacht and the three dollars and a half for the pup."

Trevor looked blank.

"I'd forgotten about the yacht," he muttered.

"Forgotten about it!" cried Carl. "Why, man alive, we just bought it ten minutes ago!"

"I know. But—I tell you—I'll write to the pater;

I fancy he'll send me money enough for the puppy; he always gives me any money I may need for useful things."

The others exploded into violent laughter.

"Call that useful?" gurgled Dick, holding his sides and pointing derisively at the puppy, which lay limp but blissful with half-closed eyes in Trevor's arms. A warning whistle made unnecessary any reply, and the four boys hurried toward the station.

"You'd better hide him under your coat, or else they'll make you ride in the baggage car with him," cautioned Dick. And so Trevor boarded the train with a suspicious portliness, happily unobserved of the conductor, and, when they had yielded their tickets, drew the uncomplaining puppy from under his sweater.

"I'll say one thing for it," remarked Carl grudgingly, "it behaves mighty well, considering that it has just been torn from home and parents." He held out a hand and the puppy went into spasms of delight over the evidence of friendship and licked the fingers deliriously. "Funny little beggar! How old is it, Trevor?"

"About ten weeks, I fancy."

"What are you going to call him?" asked Stewart.

Trevor shook his head thoughtfully.

"I don't know yet. I shall wait until I find something appropriate."

"Talking about names," said Carl, "let's find one for

the boat. That fellow said she was the Lucy G., but that's silly and doesn't mean anything."

"Ought to be something wintry," suggested Stewart.

"Something like Blizzard, or Snowflake, or Ice King," added Dick.

"It can't be any of those," objected Carl, "because there are heaps of Blizzards and the other things you said. How would The Polar Bear do?"

Every one sniffed derisively.

"Well," said Trevor, "if it must be something wintry, what's the matter with The Ulster or The Cough Drop?"

"Or The Chilblain?" laughed Dick.

"I think a good name would be The Sleet," Stewart struck in. "That's wintry enough."

A vote was taken, and The Sleet carried.

"We can have a sail next Saturday," suggested Carl.

"So soon?" groaned Dick. "Carl, we're so young to die!"

"That's all right, my funny friend, but just you wait until I get to sailing that thing; you'll see!"

And Carl's prediction, though vague, proved in a measure correct.

CHAPTER XI

ADVENTURES OF A BULL PUP

Trevor smuggled the puppy into his room undetected, against Dick's advice.

"If Faculty finds it out you'll not only lose the animal, but get into trouble. And they're bound to learn of it before long. Why, the 'goody' will see the thing when she makes the beds."

"No, she won't; I'll find a way to fix that," answered Trevor confidently.

"But how'll you keep him alive?" asked Dick. "The poor little thing has got to eat."

"Oh, I can bring him something from dining-hall."

Dick shrugged his shoulders and gave up the argument. And having relieved his conscience by his protest, joined his roommate in teaching the puppy to sit on his hind legs and hold a piece of cracker on his nose: a feat which the animal could not for a long time see the philosophy of. When, however, he discovered that obedience invariably gave him possession of the fragment of biscuit to crumble to his heart's content over the hearth-rug, he began to understand the game, and to even show a certain pleasure

in it. After the work in the gymnasium that afternoon Trevor and Dick walked to the village and the former purchased—I regret to say on credit, thereby infringing one of the rules—a red leather collar and a steel chain. When Trevor left the dining-hall after supper his coat pockets bulged suspiciously, and later the puppy feasted regally on cold roast beef and graham bread, while the two boys watched every mouthful with delight. When bedtime came Trevor arranged a pair of old tennis trousers by the hearth, and placing the puppy thereon, assured him sternly that he was expected to remain there quietly until morning.

Perhaps Trevor's commands were not altogether clear. That as may be, he had no sooner put out the light and snuggled himself into bed than there arose a sound of grief and dismay in the study, followed presently by tiny footfalls on the bedroom floor.

"Lie down!" commanded Trevor sternly.

The whining ceased for a minute, and a tail thumped the floor delightedly. And then, as no further recognition seemed forthcoming, the whining began again in increased volume and with added pathos.

"Puppy, go lie down," whispered Trevor, more mildly this time. Dick was laughing silently beyond in the darkness. The puppy again thumped the floor with his tail.

"Perhaps he's cold," suggested Dick.

"The poor little fellow wants to get up on the bed, I fancy," answered Trevor. "I'll spread my dressing-gown

for him at the foot." This was done, and the disturbing element was hauled to the bed by the nape of his neck. But stay on the dressing-gown he would not, and Trevor finally fell asleep with the small, warm bundle of dog lying against his breast, and a tiny, bullet-shaped head resting peacefully on his neck.

The real troubles began next morning. When the two boys started for breakfast they locked the door carefully, and had reached the stairs, when, faint but unmistakable as to character, came a long howl of grief. Fearfully, Trevor hurried back. The puppy was sitting erect and tragic just inside the door. His delight at Trevor's return was, however, short-lived, for he was ignominiously shut in the closet, and Trevor, with the key in his pocket, again set forth. But he could find little enjoyment in breakfast, for all the while he was haunted by the fear that the "goody" would get into the room before he could return, hear the dog's howls, and report the matter to Professor Tomkins, the resident instructor. He hurried back to Masters with his meal but half eaten, and breathed a sigh of relief when he found the beds still unmade and the room still untidied. From the closet came eager, questioning sniffs and whines of impatience. Trevor opened the door, tossed in a mutton chop, and quickly secured it again. And then the study door opened and the "goody" entered.

"Good-morning, Mr. Nesbitt."

"Good-morning, Mrs. Pratt."

Trevor seized a Latin book, subsided into a chair by the closet and tried to read. From behind the locked door came sounds of busy gnawings; once a diminutive growl was audible. But the "goody" was in the other room and so all was safe. Trevor discovered that he was holding the book upside down; he corrected the mistake and wondered why it was that the beds took so long to make this morning of all others. They were finally completed, however, and the crucial moment arrived. Armed with dust-cloth, the woman came out and slowly began to move about the study. Suddenly from behind the locked door came two distinct taps; it was only the puppy worrying the mutton bone, but the "goody" didn't know that, and looked in alarm toward the closet.

"What was that?" she asked.

"What was what?" asked Trevor.

"That sound; them sounds—in there?"

"Pshaw, you're dreaming; there—there's no one in——"

Something bumped softly against the door; the woman glanced suspiciously from Trevor to the closet. Trevor looked carelessly out the window and began to whistle. A low whine issued from the prison. Trevor heard it, but apparently the "goody" didn't; he whistled louder. The whining increased. Trevor began to sing.

Then began a most appalling series of bumps, growls, knocks, whines, jars, gnawings, and similar disturbing

noises from the closet. With loudly thumping heart Trevor sang on, rapidly, loudly, unceasingly. The woman turned and viewed him in astonishment not unmixed with alarm. Trevor's singing was more creditable from the point of vigor and whole-souledness than on the score of harmony or rhythm. His notes were nearly all flats, which, with the fact that he never for an instant varied the time, made even the most joyous of ballads lugubrious when performed by him. He had finished In the Gloaming, Way down upon the Suwanee River, and Rule, Britannia, and was now breathlessly, heroically thundering forth Hilltonians in tones that could be, and probably were, heard in the next dormitory:

"Hilltonians, Hilltonians, your crimson banner fling"
(Bang! Bump! Gr-r-r-r!)
"Unto the breeze, and 'neath its folds your anthem loudly sing!"
(Whack! Bang! Bump!)
"Hilltonians, Hilltonians, our loyalty we'll prove
Beneath the flag, the crimson flag, the bonny flag we love!"
(Gr-r-r-r! Ao-o-oow! Ao-o-o-ow! Bang!)

And then, with her hands over her ears and her dust-cloth trailing in defeat, the "goody" fled from the room, and the day was won! Trevor sank back exhausted. From the closet the strange sounds continued to issue. He sat up and stared fearfully at the closed door. What, he asked himself with sinking heart, what could they mean? He drew forth the key, crossed the room, unlocked the door, threw it open, and—

Out tumbled the puppy and—and—could it be? It could; it was!—one of Dick's immaculate patent-leather pumps, torn and chewed into as sorry a looking object as he had ever seen!

At sight of Trevor the puppy dropped his prize, put his small head on one side, wagged his tail proudly, and gazed up at his master as though asking "How's that for a good job well done?"

Trevor peered into the closet and groaned. The floor was a mass of *débris*; shoes and garments from the hooks were writhed together madly; and everywhere was set the puppy's mark of approval. Trevor gathered up the garments and returned them to their hooks. A cold, blunt nose thrust itself into the way. Trevor's hand rose and fell smartly twice, and with a yelp the puppy retreated to the hearth-rug, where he turned and barked defiance.

Trevor observed him wrathfully for an instant, but his attitude of insulted dignity and his ferocious challenge to combat were so ludicrous that the boy subsided amid the wreckage and laughed until the tears came. And the puppy, bounding joyfully upon him, instantly forgiving, gurgled his pleasure and licked his hands, shoes, and face with whole-souled impartiality.

And upon this scene entered Dick!

Let us draw the curtain.

That night, long after Dick had dropped off to slumber, he was awakened by Trevor's urgent voice.

"Dick! Dick! Wake up!"

"Wha-what's the matter?" cried Dick, starting suddenly from sleep, and sitting up in bed with confused visions of fire and flood.

"I've found a name for him," answered Trevor triumphantly.

"Name? What name? Who's name?"

"The puppy's. I'm going to call him Muggins!"

Dick snorted wrathfully and went back to sleep.

Trevor fondled the slumberous puppy. "Isn't he an unfeeling brute, Muggins?" he whispered. And Muggins thumped his tail affirmatively, sleepily.

The following night, when all was silent in the dormitory, a form bundled against the weather in a greatcoat, and followed by a second form, vastly smaller in outline and wearing only the coat that nature had provided him with, might have been seen—but were not—tiptoeing from study No. 16 and descending the creaking stairs. The door was locked, but the key was there, and in a moment the two forms had vanished into outer darkness and the portal had closed again.

As the discerning reader has no doubt already surmised, the mysterious forms were those of Trevor and Muggins.

Trevor had concluded that Muggins's health demanded more exercise than his puppyship was getting, and so on the preceding night and again to-night Muggins, at the end

of the steel chain, had been surreptitiously conveyed from the building for a stroll about the yard. It was bitterly cold and Trevor shivered as he ambled slowly toward the gymnasium followed by the dog; but since Muggins's health demanded exercise Muggins should have it, though the thermometer stood at miles below zero, which luckily it didn't to-night. Around the gymnasium plodded Trevor, slipping, sliding on the icy walks; around trotted Muggins, sniffing, shivering in the nipping wind. Then down the path by Bradley to Turner, around the corner of Turner, and——

Alas, tragedy was in the air that night!

Trevor paused, listening. Footsteps sounded loudly, frostily at a little distance, and in the darkness a dim form loomed up from the direction of the gate. It was but the work of an instant to slink into the recess of the building made by the protruding entrance, and to pull Muggins after him. The footsteps drew nearer. One of the professors returning late from the village, Trevor told himself. The form came abreast of him, a scant two yards distant, and was almost past his hiding-place when Muggins awoke to the demands of the occasion.

Muggins, despite his tender age, was valor to the tip of his wagging tail. He heard strange footsteps; he saw a strange form; he feared an attack on his master. But, what ho! was not he, Muggins, there? Certainly! And—

Away went the chain from Trevor's numbed fingers;

away went Muggins, dashing to the fray like a knight of old!

"*Bow! Bow-wow!*" challenged Muggins.

Trevor heard an ejaculation of alarmed surprise, saw the form of the tall professor jump back, and then—then there was a crash, and Trevor, seizing the opportunity, was off like the wind, and had gained the doorway of Masters Hall ere the astonished professor had regained his feet. For Muggins in his excess of valor had got his small body between his adversary's legs, and great and sudden was the fall. Trevor waited long at the entrance of Masters Hall, standing with door ajar and peering anxiously into the darkness; once even venturing upon a subdued whistle and a yearning "Muggins, Muggins!" But his appeals were vain, and after a while he crept dejectedly upstairs and back into his cold and Muggins-less bed, wondering, sorrowful, fearful of the morrow.

CHAPTER XII

MUGGINS IS EXPELLED

Dick learned the story the next morning while the boys were dressing, and, to Trevor's pained surprise, subsided onto the hearth-rug, where he sprawled at length, and gave way to heartless mirth.

"Oh, I dare say *you* don't care," said Trevor with wounded dignity. "He wasn't *your* dog. If he had been" —savagely—"I dare say *I* should have laughed!" Dick stopped rolling and sat up against the wood-box.

"But—but, don't you see, Trevor," he gurgled, "I'm —I'm not laughing because you've lost Buggins——"

"Muggins," corrected Trevor coldly.

"I—I mean Muggins. I'm awfully sorry about that, honest injun! But—but think of Longworth—it must have been Longworth, you see—think of him rolling over there on the ice, all tangled up with Bug—Muggins and the chain! Oh, jiminy!" And Dick went off into another spasm of laughter.

Trevor stared thoughtfully into the flames, trying to summon up the picture that appeared so delightful to his roommate. After a moment he smiled faintly.

"Yes, I see; yes, I fancy it was comical. But—but wasn't it awfully brave of Muggins?"

"Awfully," answered Dick with emphasis as he sat up again, dried his eyes with a towel, and proceeded with his dressing. "Perhaps you'll find him again."

But Trevor shook his head sadly.

"No chance of that. Poor Muggins!"

After chapel that morning Professor Wheeler, the principal, arose. "One of the professors while returning through the yard late last evening came across a—a young dog wearing a collar and chain. There are reasons to believe that the animal belongs to one of you, as the professor caught sight of a boy running toward a dormitory."

A murmur of surprise, amusement, and excitement traveled through the hall. Boys studied each other's faces questioningly. "He saw you after all!" whispered Dick. "I don't see how he could," whispered Trevor.

"There is a rule," continued the principal, "forbidding the keeping of dogs, or any sort of animals, in the academy buildings." He paused, and then added grimly: "I will ask the owner of the animal to stand up."

There was a flutter of excitement; heads turned expectantly for sight of the unlucky youth. Silence reigned save for the whisperings of the boys. But no one arose. The principal waited calmly, patiently, for several minutes.

"Very well," he said then. "I want every resident of Masters Hall to come to my office at a quarter of nine,

prompt." He moved down the steps and the boys flocked from their seats and hurried out of chapel, laughing, whispering in the throes of a new sensation. Trevor groaned as he arose.

"I fancy it would have been better if I'd 'fessed up," he said to Dick. "Perhaps he'd have let me off easier. What do you think?"

"Blessed if I know. Anyhow, there's no harm done so far; you have a right to refuse to incriminate yourself. Only what he wants us at the office for I can't see, unless he's going to ask each one of us separately. In that case it's all up with you."

"In that case I'll own up, of course," said Trevor. "But it's rather tough getting into another fuss just when I've got over that stage-coach business. Maybe it'll be probation this time."

"Oh, I guess not," answered Dick as they crossed the dining-hall. "And it isn't like Wheels to ask the fellows to tell on each other; and that's why I can't understand this office business."

At the appointed time forty-two youths of various ages and sizes crowded into the principal's office in Academy Building. The office consists in reality of two rooms, an outer and an inner apartment, the first used by the secretary, the second sacred to Professor Wheeler. The outer room was crowded when the principal entered, and a gasp of surprise went up when it was seen that under one arm he

carried a small, wriggling, greatly excited bull puppy, which strove earnestly to reach his face with an eager pink tongue. The principal appeared to appreciate the humor of his entrance, for there was a slight twitch at the corners of his mouth, as though he would have liked to smile. At sight of Muggins Trevor started and made as though to move forward and claim his property, but Dick laid a warning hand on his arm, and he kept his place and watched professor and dog disappear into the inner office. The forty-two youths—or to be strictly truthful—forty of them—gazed wonderingly into each other's faces while titters of suppressed laughter ran up and down the ranks. Then the principal came out again still with the squirming puppy in his arms, and the titters died away abruptly.

"Are we all here?" he asked. "Supposing you form into, say, three lines across the room here; that's it; now I can count you. Exactly; forty-two; a full attendance, I see. Kindly give me your attention for a moment." He held up the puppy, a squirming white mass of legs, tail, and pink tongue. "I have here, as you see, a young dog, of just what breed, age, and previous condition of servitude I am in doubt. But it has, as you will observe, a collar of Hillton crimson and a strong steel chain; possibly we shall be able to identify it by those. Now the owner, or at least the companion at a late hour last night, of this animal is known to room in your dormitory. I have called you to-

gether here in order that he may claim his property. I will ask him to do so."

Each boy viewed his neighbor suspiciously, but none said a word. As before, the principal waited calmly, patiently, for several moments. Then:

"Very well. You will perhaps recollect the saying in regard to Mahomet and the mountain. The mountain having refused to go to Mahomet, Mahomet very sensibly decided to go to the mountain. In this case, as the owner refuses to go to the dog, we will see if the dog will go to the owner."

Professor deposited the puppy on the floor. Forty-two —or, to be again truthful, forty—youths viewed the animal with apprehension. It was all very clever, of course, and no doubt had a flavor of humor, but—but supposing that silly dog got it into his head that *they* were his owner! How could they prove that they weren't? How produce a satisfactory *alibi*? They stirred uneasily, and frowned at the puppy.

The puppy, meanwhile, sat down and industriously scratched his neck.

But after that a spirit of adventure seized him, and he cast an inquiring glance over the breathless assembly. Then he moved forward and sniffed tentatively at the damp boots of Todd, who stood in the middle of the front line. Todd held his breath and turned pale. But Muggins evidently didn't fancy wet leather, for he moved off down

the line, sniffing here and there, but without enthusiasm. Once he paused and cocked an interrogatory brown eye up at Williams. And it was Williams's turn to wish himself away. He frowned darkly, threateningly, and Muggins, scenting animosity, turned tail. Williams heaved a sigh of relief.

Muggins now crawled laboriously between the feet of the next youth, and found himself confronted by a second rank of motionless, silent, and unsympathetic persons. He began to feel nervous. He stopped and, pointing his blunt nose toward heaven, howled long and dismally. Some one laughed, and the spell of terror was broken. Even Professor Wheeler smiled, while Muggins, delighted at the evidence of companionship, wagged his tail and began his search anew. Dick and Trevor stood, backs to the wall, in the last of the three lines. Trevor watched the puppy, scowling ferociously. The suspense was awful. He never for an instant doubted that sooner or later Nemesis in the shape of Muggins would find him out. Meanwhile he frowned, clenched his fists, and waited for his doom. His doom when it came came speedily.

Muggins had apparently lost interest in the proceedings, and had begun to whine softly, when suddenly he stopped dead short, and putting his head aloft, twitched the wrinkled end of his pink nose and sniffed suspiciously. One ear went up at an animated angle, and he put his little bullet-shaped head on one side. Professor Wheeler moved

softly forward to a point where he could better watch events, and Trevor, after one annihilating glance at the puppy, stared straight before him. Muggins squirmed through the second rank, showing signs of strong excitement. And then—

Then there was a yelp of triumph, of delight, and Muggins was leaping deliriously at Trevor, giving vent to his joy in short explosive barks and gurgling yelps.

"I won't keep you any longer," said the principal. "If any of you are late at recitations, you may explain that it was my fault. I will ask Nesbitt to remain for a few minutes."

And with grins of relief and amusement the forty-one boys crowded forth, leaving Trevor standing there alone, very red in the face, and with the puppy clasped close in his arms. Then the principal and Trevor and Muggins adjourned to the inner room. And there, while Muggins lay curled contentedly against the boy's breast—simply because he couldn't be induced to stay anywhere else—Trevor, rather haltingly, explained.

"And you had the dog in your study ever since Saturday?"

"Yes, sir."

"But how—I can't understand why no one discovered it. Didn't the 'goody' see it there?"

"No, sir." And Trevor explained his manner of keeping that worthy person in ignorance. And once or twice

during the recital, although Trevor really didn't do the narrative half justice, the professor concealed his smiles with difficulty. And then, when there was nothing more to be said on Trevor's side, the principal sat silent for several moments, gazing out of the window. And Trevor took heart.

"Well, the whole case seems to have been one of sudden infatuation between a boy and a dog," said Professor Wheeler at last, "rather than a preconceived plan to create mischief or transgress the rules. Under the circumstances—— But, of course, you understand that the dog can not remain in the grounds?"

"I suppose not, sir." And the principal smiled at the lad's dolorous tones.

"No; now I would suggest that you take him to the village and find some one there to look after him for you; I think you can do it; you might try Watson's stables, back of the Eagle. Then you can see the dog occasionally, though you must promise never to bring him onto school grounds."

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir."

"And I think that that will be punishment enough for the case. You may go, Nesbitt. And you may leave the puppy here, if you like, until you have an opportunity to go to the village."

"Thank you very much, sir," answered Trevor gratefully.

"By the way, it's a bulldog, isn't it?" asked the principal. "Yes, I thought so; that head, you know; very intelligent creature, to be sure."

And then Trevor placed Muggins on the principal's big leather couch, with never a doubt but that that was the most appropriate place for him, and sneaked to the door. And when he hurried down the steps of Academy Building, shrill and faint came to his ears the wailing of Muggins.

After dinner, accompanied by Dick, he conveyed the puppy to the village and arranged for his board and room —the latter a comfortable soap-box in the office—at Watson's livery-stable. And after a heartrending parting the two boys returned to the academy and two o'clock recitations.

"Do you think he'll be happy there?" asked Trevor wistfully.

"Sure to be," Dick assured him. "He'll be as happy as—as a bull pup!"

The following afternoon Carl Gray burst excitedly into the study, where the two were deep in the morrow's lessons.

"It's come!" he cried triumphantly. "She's here!"

"Who's come?" asked Dick blankly.

"What's here?" echoed Trevor.

"Why, the ice-yacht—The Sleet!"

CHAPTER XIII

THE VOYAGE OF THE SLEET

The Scene.—The boat-house landing and the river thereabouts.
The Time.—Four-thirty of the following Saturday afternoon.
Characters.—Dick, Trevor, Carl, Stewart, an ice-yacht, chorus of boys on skates.

Chorus: "Heave-o! Now, all together! Heave!"

Carl: "Hang the thing, anyhow! What's the matter with it?"

Dick: "Well, since you know all about the art of ice-sailing, it strikes me that you ought to be able to raise a little old pillow-sham of a sail like that!"

Trevor: "Let's pull on this rope and see what happens."

Chorus: "How'd you like to be the ice-yachtsmen?"

Carl: "That's the rope! Take hold here, fellows!"

Chorus: "Everybody shove!"

Carl: "There she goes! Make a hitch there, Dick! Jump on, quick! *Whoa!*"

Chorus: "A-ah!"

The boat catches the wind, starts suddenly up-stream, as suddenly changes its mind, veers about, rams the landing,

backs off, charges a group of boys on skates, and then stands motionless with its head into the wind and laughs so that its sail flaps.

It is now discovered that there is room on the yacht for but three fellows at the most, and every one save Carl begs to be allowed to sacrifice his pleasure and remain at home. The choice falls to Stewart, and he joins the chorus with a countenance eloquent of relief. Carl, Dick, and Trevor huddle together on the cockpit, and a portion of the chorus shoves the yacht's head about. The sail fills, and the yacht glides off up-stream in a strong breeze, to the jeers and biting sarcasms of the chorus, many of whom pretend to weep agonizedly into their handkerchiefs.

The Sleet had been delivered and paid for the preceding Wednesday. She was an old-style boat with a length of sixteen feet and a sail area altogether too small for her size. A new coat of brilliant—and as yet but partly dried—crimson paint hid a multitude of weak places. The cockpit, upholstered with a piece of faded red carpet, was barely large enough to allow the three boys to huddle onto it.

The boat-house and landing, Stewart, and the contemptuous chorus were soon left behind, and The Sleet gained momentum every second. Carl held the tiller, and Dick and Trevor held their breaths. The wind was straight abaft, but the cold made the boys huddle closely together to protect their faces. The academy buildings faded from

sight in the gray afternoon haze, and the river stretched cold and bleak before them.

"How fast are we going?" asked Dick.

"I don't know; pretty well, I guess," answered Carl. "Fine, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Dick, doubtfully. "Only I don't think we ought to go far away, you know; eh, Trevor?"

"Oh, let her rip. What's the difference whether we get killed here or farther up? Pull open the throttle, Carl!"

"Look out for your heads, then; I'm going to swing her across to the other side."

Carl moved the tiller to starboard, and the yacht tacked toward the farther shore at a truly alarming speed.

"She's going awful fast, Carl," gasped Dick.

"Pshaw! this is nothing. If there was only a decent wind——"

"Wow, Carl, she's keeling over!" yelled Trevor.

The starboard runner was a whole foot above the ice. The sensation was distinctly unpleasant, and even Carl seemed not to relish it.

"Let's see," he muttered. "Oh, yes." He moved the tiller cautiously, and the flighty runner settled down upon the surface once more.

"That's better," gasped Dick. "Let's turn here and go back, fellows," he suggested with a fine semblance of carelessness. Carl grinned.

"Dick's scared silly, Trevor," he shouted.

"Well, so'm I," answered Trevor. "And so are you, only you won't let on. The bally thing goes so fast that it makes you feel funny inside you. But it *is* fun, Carl. *Look out for the bank!*"

Over went the tiller again, and the yacht started on the starboard tack. The hills on either side were flying past, and now and then a cluster of houses were seen dimly for an instant, and then was lost to sight.

"What's that ahead there?" asked Dick. Carl raised his eyes and followed the other's gaze.

"Ice-yacht," he answered. "Perhaps they'll race us."

"Perhaps they will," muttered Trevor, "but if you go any faster when you race, I'll get off the blooming thing and walk."

"Bully boy!" cried Carl. "Feeling better, aren't you?"

"Well, I fancy I've got some of my breath back, you know. But I don't mind saying that I'd rather ride on a cyclone than this contrivance. And my feet are like snowballs!"

"So are mine," echoed Dick. "And all the rest of me. But let's ask 'em to race, Carl."

The other yacht, which when first sighted had been a long distance up the river, was now but a short way ahead, and was almost motionless, nose into the wind, as though awaiting the arrival of The Sleet. While the latter boat

was still an eighth of a mile distant a form sprang into view on the yacht ahead and a hand waved in challenge. Carl steadied himself on his knees and waved back.

"We'll race you!" he bawled.

An answering gesture showed that he had been heard, and the figure disappeared. In another moment the two yachts were abreast, and the stranger swung about and took the wind. She had two persons aboard, a man and a woman, both so wrapped from the weather as to be scarcely distinguishable. She was a much larger boat than The Sleet, sloop-rigged, with immaculate white sails and without side-timbers. She wore no paint, but her woodwork was varnished until it shone. Altogether there was scarcely any comparison between the two yachts, so immeasurably superior was the sloop in every detail.

The Sleet meanwhile had gained an eighth of a mile, perhaps, ere the stranger had found the wind, but now the latter came booming after them at a spanking gait, her big sails as stiff as though frozen. Carl grinned.

"It'll be a mighty short race, my boys. She can sail all around this little triangle. But we'll give her a go, just the same." He brought The Sleet closer to the wind, and then began a series of long tacks that sent the boat fairly flying over the ice. But the stranger was already at the same tactics, and ere a mile had passed was abreast of The Sleet, though at the other side of the river, and her crew were waving derisively across.

"Well, if we had as much sail as you have," growled Carl, "we might be in your class; as it is, we aren't. But The Sleet is a good goer, all the same."

The other boat stood across into the middle of the river, and then, as though her former efforts had been but the merest dawdling, bounded away, and was soon but a small white speck far up the ice in the haze.

"Let's turn back now," suggested Dick. "It must be getting toward half-past five, and you must remember that we won't be able to make as fast time going down the river as we have coming up."

"All right, we'll turn in a minute."

And then Carl, whose knowledge of ice-yachting was derived from the hurried perusal of a library book on the subject, cudgeled his brains to recollect how to "go about." Of course, he might lower the sail and then bring her around, but that would be a most clumsy, unsportsmanlike method, and so not to be seriously considered. Presumably, the thing to do was to luff.

"Stand by to luff!" he bawled. Dick and Trevor stared.

"Stand!" cried Trevor indignantly. "Why, I can't stand, you idiot. It's all I can do to hold on as it is!"

"Well, look out for the boom, then. I'm going to bring her about."

"Who?" asked Trevor innocently. But he got no answer, and the next instant he had forgotten his question, for

Carl had thrust the helm hard over without first ascertaining that the sheet was clear. It wasn't. The result was startling. The wind struck the sail full, and the yacht swung violently to port, tilted almost onto her beam ends. Carl and Trevor went rapidly through space and brought up on the ice yards and yards away, happily uninjured save for minor bruises and scratches, and The Sleet, righting herself, bounded forward with Dick clutching desperately, dazedly, at the port runner-beam.

When the shock had come Dick, like the others, had been thrown from the cockpit, but, by good luck or bad, had encountered the end of the cross-timber, just over the runner, and had seized it and clung to it with no very clear idea as to what it was, and not greatly caring. And now, when he opened his eyes and gazed confusedly about, he found the yacht ringing merrily over the ice and, judging by the feeling, kicking up her heels in delight, and found himself wrapped convulsively about the beam with the wind whistling madly in his ears and blowing his hair helter-skelter, for in his flight through air his cap and he had parted company. He cast a look backward and thought that for an instant he could discern in the gathering darkness two figures. Near at hand the stays ran to the masthead, and he edged himself toward them until he could grasp one in his numbed fingers. Then he was able to gain the support of the mast, somewhat painfully, for he found that his shoulder ached horribly, and that his lip had been cut and

was swelling to disconcerting size. By means of the boom, which was swinging agitatedly as though constantly meditating a veer to the other side, he reached the cockpit, and there, stretched once more at length, he studied the situation.

Apparently, there was no immediate danger; the yacht was heading fairly straight up the middle of the river, and although now and then the stern slid this way or that, she was behaving well. But the imperative thing was to stop. Dick tried to undo a rope that looked promising, but his fingers were numb and stiff, despite the woolen gloves that covered them, and refused to act. He peered ahead into the descending darkness. The shore to the left was getting rather too near for comfort, and he seized the tiller, and, half fearful of the result, swung it to the right, with the startling result that the yacht headed more directly toward the threatening shore. Desperately he moved the tiller to the left, and gave a sigh of relief as the boat's nose swung toward midstream. Encouraged by his success he presently moved the helm back a little, and with the yacht's head pointing a middle course, again tried to think of some means of bringing his unwelcome voyage to an end. He knew nothing, practically, of yachting on either water or ice, but he knew that if he could get the sail down the boat would eventually stop. Painfully he drew off a glove and sought his pocket-knife. It was not there. He tried all his pockets with the same disappointing result. Then he

drew his glove back over his deadened hand, and thought desperately of jumping off and letting The Sleet look after herself. But the prospect of being dashed across the ice at the risk of a broken limb didn't appeal to him; and besides, he felt in a measure responsible for the safe return of the confounded boat.

"Stand by the ship!" he muttered with an attempt at a grin.

The wind seemed now to be decreasing in force, but The Sleet still charged away into the gathering blackness with breathless speed. At a loss for any better solution, Dick struggled again at the rope, and it seemed that success was about to reward his efforts when there was a sudden jar, followed a second later by a strange sinking sensation, the sound of breaking ice, and then Dick felt the cockpit being lifted up and up, and ere he could grasp anything he was rolled over the edge and plunged downward into icy water.

"Stand by the ship!" he muttered.

CHAPTER XIV

DICK TELLS HIS STORY

When Carl and Trevor, bruised and breathless, found their feet and stared about them, The Sleet was already a whisking gray blot in the twilight. Trevor obeyed his first impulse and limping up the ice in the direction of the disappearing boat, called frantically: "Dick! Dick!" Then, realizing the absurdity of his chase after a thing that was probably reeling off half a mile every minute or so, he stopped and came dejectedly back to where Carl was silently rubbing a bruised thigh.

"Dick will be killed!" he cried hoarsely. "What shall we do?"

"Get back to the academy," said Carl.

"What good will that do?"

"They can telegraph up the river and get some one to look for him. I wonder how far from Hillton we are?"

"I don't know," answered Trevor, "but let's hurry. Which way shall we go?"

"Across the river to the railroad track. Maybe, Trevor, there's a station between here and Hillton; there ought to be, eh?"

"I don't know," sorrowed his companion. "Do you think Dick might have dropped off after we saw him? Maybe, Carl, he's lying up there on the ice somewhere."

"I don't believe so. I think Dick will hold on as long as he can. Perhaps he will manage to get back onto the boat; if he does he ought to be able to stop her; he knows enough to lower the sail, I guess. I dare say he'll turn up all right before long. The best thing for us to do is to find a telegraph office as soon as we can. Come ahead."

Somewhat comforted, Trevor limped along and the two gained the river bank and stumbled through the darkness to the railroad track. Down this they tramped, silent for the most part, with feet that had no feeling left in them, and with fingers that ached terribly. How far from the academy they were neither had any idea; perhaps ten miles, perhaps less. As for the time, that at least they knew, for Trevor managed to get his watch out and Carl supplied a match; the hands pointed to twenty minutes of six.

"We ought to be home by seven," said Carl with attempted cheerfulness. Trevor groaned.

A quarter of an hour passed; a half. It was too dark to recognize anything save the lines of track, which had left the river some distance to the right. Suddenly a slight turn brought into view a cluster of lights, white and green.

"A station!" cried Trevor.

The two boys increased their gait and five minutes later passed a freight train on a siding, and found a little box

of a station, ablaze with light, and oh, how warm! Around a great whitewashed stove in the middle of the waiting-room sat three men. Two had woolen caps on; the third was bareheaded, and him the boys rightly judged to be the station-master. Their story was quickly told, and a moment later the key at the telegraph desk was ticking off messages to stations up the line.

"You must have got thrown out at about Whitely Mills," said one of the men at the stove. "The boat would have a clear track from there up to—— I say, Gus," he called suddenly to the man at the instrument, "they were cutting ice to-day at the houses just this side of Lorraine. That would be a bad part of the river to get onto in the dark. You'd better tell the fellow at Lorraine to send some one down there with a lantern; what d'ye think, Joe?"

The third man nodded his head. "Bad place; I noticed they were cutting pretty well out toward the channel."

"All right," said the station-master. And the instrument ticked on. Carl and Trevor sat by the stove and held their feet and hands to the grateful warmth. They were too tired, too dejected to talk. The engineer and conductor of the waiting freight eyed them curiously but kindly. Finally the latter asked:

"How you boys going to get to Hillton?"

"Walk," answered Carl with a faint smile. "How far is it from here?"

"Twelve miles."

The two lads looked at each other and groaned.

"Well, I don't care so much, now that I've got thawed out a bit," said Trevor. "How far do you think we have walked?"

"I guess it's about three miles from Whitely here."

"At that rate," commented Carl dismally, "it will take us two hours longer to reach Hillton. And"—he glanced at the station clock—"it's now twenty after six; say half-past eight." The engineer and conductor were exchanging glances of amusement. Finally the conductor spoke again:

"Well, I guess we can fix it so as you won't have to walk. The through freight will be here in seven minutes, and I guess they'll give you a lift. If they don't you can ride down with us, although we won't get there much before seven. We're slow but sure, we are; twenty-eight cars of coal and a caboose."

The boys brightened and thanked the railroad men fervently. And then the station-master left the telegraph instrument and came out into the waiting-room.

"It's all right. I've put 'em on as far north as Yorkvale, and if he's still on the yacht they'll find him, I guess." He turned to the conductor and added in lower tones: "Gregson, at Lorraine, says he'll see that a party goes down right away; says he doesn't believe a yacht could pass there to-night, as the river hasn't had time to freeze much since they quit cutting at about four."

The conductor nodded. From far off came the long,

shrill blast of a locomotive whistle, and the men drew on their coats, and presently, followed closely by Carl and Trevor, left the station.

There was a flood of yellow light on the rails to the north, and the next instant the fast freight thundered by them for half its length, the brake shoes rasping deafeningly against the wheels. The matter was soon arranged, and Trevor and Carl found themselves sitting in the strange little caboose about a tiny stove that was almost red-hot, and telling their story to two of the train crew. And then, almost before they knew that they had got well started, the train slowed down, and they were tumbled out into the snow at the Hillton crossing, and, shouting their thanks after the scurrying car as it romped off again into the darkness, they took up the last stage of their journey. But now, aside from the anxiety they felt as to Dick's fate, they were fairly comfortable and contented; and the prospect of supper—for it seemed to them that never before in the history of the world had two persons been so hungry—allowed them to view their coming interview with the principal with something approaching equanimity.

Half an hour later Professor Beck was speeding northward in a buggy behind the fastest horse in Watson's stables, and Trevor and Carl, subdued and anxious, were eating as though their lives depended upon it in the deserted dining-hall. And afterward Trevor donned his ridiculous red dressing-gown and sat in front of the study fire for

hours, listening anxiously for sounds on the stairs that would tell of Dick's safe return. Sleep, despite his best endeavors, besieged him constantly, and now and then he dropped off for a minute or two, only to reawake with a start and rub his smarting eyes confusedly.

"I wish Muggins was here," he sighed. "It wouldn't be so lonely." Then the clock gathered its hands together at the figure XII, and Trevor crept sleepily but protestingly to bed and dropped into heavy slumber the moment his head touched the pillow.

Once—it seemed as though it must be almost daylight—there were disturbing sounds in the bedroom, and Trevor turned over with a groan, and, even while he was asking himself what the noise meant, went off to slumber again. When he awoke in the morning, and the happenings of the previous evening rushed back to memory, he sat up suddenly with a wild, anxious look toward the neighboring bed, and a deep sigh of relief and joy escaped him. For Dick's tumbled head lay on the pillow, and Dick's hearty snores made music in his ears.

In the afternoon the crew of The Sleet, including Stewart, were gathered about the hearth in Number 16, listening breathlessly to Dick's narrative.

"My, but that water was cold!" Dick was saying. "And deep, too. It seemed as though I never would stop going down. You see, I was so surprised that I just let myself go, and never thought of struggling for a long

while. When I did, it took me so long to reach the surface again that I hadn't any breath left in my body. I got hold of the edge of the ice and tried to pull myself out, but it was only about half an inch thick, I guess, and broke right off every time, and down I'd go again, over my head, maybe. Finally I stopped that and managed to keep my head out. It was as dark as Egypt by that time, but after awhile I caught sight of The Sleet just a few yards away, sticking up into the air like a big triangle. It was on its side with one runner 'way under the water. Farther off I could make out three black hulks of things that I concluded were ice-houses, and Professor Beck says that's what they were. Of course, when I saw the yacht I knew that I was all right; all I had to do was to keep on breaking the ice until I reached it. But I was so plaguy cold, and my teeth were chattering so, and my clothing was so heavy that it wasn't very easy after all. But after a while I found something that wasn't ice; it was the sail, and it was lying flat over the water and broken ice. It sagged down with me after I managed to get onto it, but held me all right, and I crawled along it until I reached the—the—what do you call it, Carl?"

"Boom?"

"Yes, boom. And then I got onto the mast and leaned against a plank—the cross-plank, it was—and I was all right, except that I was almost dead with the cold, and was afraid I'd freeze to death. So I kept stamping around and

throwing my arms about as well as I could without falling into the water again, and after a while I got comparatively warmed up. Then—I suppose I'd been there fifteen or twenty minutes—I began to wonder if I couldn't get off. You see, I argued that the yacht would have broken through just as soon as the ice became thin, and so it seemed to me that there must be thick ice just back of the boat. But, try as I might, I couldn't for the life of me decide which was the back of the silly thing and which the front. And I was afraid that I'd go plumping into that beastly cold water again. But after a while I got up my pluck and went to feeling about, letting myself down here and there, and crawling around. But every time I'd try to stand on the ice, down I'd go; and so finally I gave it up. But the climbing about kept me warmed up after a fashion; I dare say I was as warm as a fellow could be with his clothes sopping wet where they weren't frozen stiff. So I crawled back to the mast again and set out to holler.

"I wish you could have heard me! I yelled in forty different styles. And when I couldn't think of anything else I cheered; cheered for Hilton, cheered for The Sleet, cheered for the ice-houses, and incidentally, my young friends, cheered myself. And then my voice and my breath gave out, and I stood still a while and kicked my frozen feet against the plank and thought about fires and cups of hot coffee and things to eat until I was nearly crazy. And then I saw some lights flickering away off in the distance to

the right of the ice-houses, and began yelling again. And that's about all. There were three fellows with lanterns and they got a piece of plank or something and took me off. And what do you think?" he asked disgustedly. "There was thick ice, half a foot thick, within three feet of me all the time!

"A man who said he was the station-master took me up to a house, and they gave me some blankets and things and dried my clothes and poured hot coffee and brandy stuff into me, and I went to sleep for a while in front of a big round stove; and was never so happy in my life. Afterward I ate some supper; my, fellows, but it was good! And then, in about an hour or so, Professor Beck popped in and said that he didn't want to hurry me, but that if I'd quite finished bathing we'd go home. The station fellow—I believe I've forgotten his name—said he'd attend to having the ice-yacht hauled out for us, and would look after it until we sent for it."

"Do you think it's much broken up?" asked Carl.

"I don't know," replied Dick vigorously, "and what's more, I don't care a continental!"

The Sleet, to anticipate a trifle, went back to its former owner at a loss to the shareholders of six dollars, and a faculty edict was solemnly published prohibiting forevermore at Hillton Academy the fascinating and exhilarating sport of ice-yachting.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE ROWING-ROOM

February came in at Hillton as though resolved to make up for its brevity by strict attention to business, and dealt out snow and sleet with a lavish hand, and bullied the elements, which had begun to show signs of relenting, into a state of sullen ferocity. For days together the sun never so much as showed its face through the leaden clouds, and the winds howled spitefully across the yard. It was the sort of weather which, as Trevor explained one afternoon, while staring dolorously out the window, fairly drove a fellow to study. The river retained its armor of glaring ice, and the white-winged yachts passed and repassed continuously, without, however, eliciting anything but the most grudging admiration from Dick. The hockey team went to Marshall and triumphed decisively over St. Eustace, who, minus Jenkins and the freckle-faced Billings, was shorn of her strength. And, as though that was not glory enough, Hillton and her old rival met in debate in the town hall at Hillton and the former won a fourth consecutive victory by proving to the satisfaction of three staid and reverend judges that the development of the arid West would prove

of more benefit to the United States than the construction of an isthmian canal.

Work in the cage had begun for the baseball candidates, and Carl Gray was very busy. Ambitious youths who were striving for places on the track team held forth three afternoons each week in the gymnasium, and a spirit of athletism seized upon the school world. The first squad of crew candidates had graduated from weights to machines, while the second squad, swelled by eight recruits since its first assembling, were still in the throes of preliminary training. Professor Beck had "hooked" the promising upper middle boy of whom he had spoken to Dick; several candidates, inclusive of the unfortunate Perry, had been dropped, and Coach Kirk had paid his first visit to the acadmy, had looked the fellows over undemonstratively, and had gone his way again. To-day, a bleak and dismal Thursday, the machines were occupied, and Professor Beck was watching the performances of the eight youths with dissatisfied mien.

"Lengthen out, Waters, lengthen out; that's better. Crocker, your recovery's too slow; put some ginger into it; this is no place to go to sleep. Four, put more drive into your legs; that's the way. Stroke, hit it up a little!" And Dick, in obedience to the command, quickened his stroke. When the rest had gone Beck turned to Dick: "Hope, what's the matter with Taylor? This is the third day he's been absent. We can't have that. You must speak to

him, and tell him that he'll have to attend to business better."

And Dick promised and went off laggingly to the task. He found Taylor in his room in a boarding-house in the village.

He was stretched out on a couch reading when Dick entered in response to a loud "Come in." He appeared surprised when he looked up and saw who his visitor was, but rose to the demands of the occasion.

"Hello, Hope, glad to see you. Sit down. Been ice-yachting lately?"

Dick replied gravely that he had not, and then heroically plunged into the subject of his visit.

"Look here, Taylor," he said, "I wish you'd try to be a little more careful about training. You missed work again to-day. This makes the third time it's happened in the last two weeks. Can't you do better than that?"

Taylor frowned and yawned lazily before he answered.

"I'm glad you've mentioned it, Hope. The fact is, I've been thinking about chucking it. I can't see how I'm going to go in for rowing this year and hope to pass spring exams. That's what the trouble is, old chap. I've been digging hard all afternoon"—adding, as he saw Dick glance at the magazine in his hands—"just this minute laid my Greek aside and took up this to—er—ease my brain." He stopped and smiled amiably across.

Dick frowned.

"That's nonsense, Taylor, and you know it," he said in low tones.

"Nonsense!" Taylor raised his eyebrows in surprise.

"Yes, nonsense. You can't convince me that you're so stupid as not to be able to train for the crew and get through with your studies. There are lots of fellows doing it; always have done it. I'm doing it myself; Crocker's doing it; so's Milton and Arnold and lots of fellows; they're all in in our class; I haven't heard them say that they were afraid of not passing."

"Well, that may be," replied Taylor, "but it's a question that every fellow must decide for himself. I honestly don't think I ought to keep up crew work; I've got my folks to think of, you know; they didn't send me to school here to row or play football or anything of that sort—that is, not that alone. I've got to pass, and to do that I've got to study. If I'm not as smart and clever as some of the rest of you"—here there was a trace of a sneer—"I can't help it; a fellow's what he is, you know."

Dick experienced an intense desire to kick his host and tell him what he thought of him. But instead he smiled conciliatingly.

"I think you're underestimating your ability, Taylor. Like a good fellow, get those notions out of your head and come back to work; do your best for the crew; it's your last year. You know what shape we're in; we haven't anywhere near the material we ought to have. Confound it,

Taylor, you've got to stay in the boat! You can't do anything else, when you stop and think how your leaving will weaken us!"

A smile of pleased vanity crossed the other boy's face. Then he shook his head resolutely.

"No, I can't do it, Hope. Oh, I've thought it all over, and I know what it means to the crew; but you'll soon find another fellow at seven, and never miss me. Of course, I'm awful sorry if it's going to make trouble for you, Hope; you know that. But it's my duty, and I guess we'd better consider the matter settled. I"—he smiled apologetically—"I'll tender my resignation, Hope."

Dick arose, striving to conceal the indignation he felt.

"I sha'n't accept it to-day, Taylor," he answered gravely. "If you feel the same way about it to-morrow evening, after thinking it over, send me word and then I'll scratch your name off the list. Only I hope you'll see your way to stay in the boat."

On the way back to the academy Dick gave vent to his feelings, creasing his brows savagely, kicking right and left at inoffending lumps of ice, and even muttering half aloud as he strode along.

"Of all mean, contemptible tricks," he thought angrily, "that's the worst! Just to spite me he's willing to see the school defeated! By Jove, I have half a mind to put the whole affair before Beck and Wheeler; the whole school ought to know it. If they did, Taylor's life wouldn't

be worth living! But, no, I can't shove it off on any one else; I'm captain; I've got to fight it out alone; and I will! And I'll turn out a decent crew in spite of Taylor, in spite of anything he can do, by Jove! I'll——"

"'Ware the dog!" cried a voice, and he looked up quickly to see Trevor grinning at him and to find Muggins leaping about him.

"Hello, Muggs!" he cried, vainly striving to bestow a pat upon that unquiet animal. "Say, Trevor, hasn't he grown? He's twice the size he was when you got him!"

"It's a way puppies have."

"You don't say so? Who'd have thunk it! Beastly cold, isn't it? Where you going?"

"You can ask a lot of questions for a small kid," laughed Trevor. "I'm going to take Muggins back to his soap-box, and then I'm going home. We've been out for a nice long walk, haven't we, Muggins? Where've you been?"

"Paying an afternoon call on Roy Taylor. Come on, I'll walk back to the stable with you."

"All right; come ahead, Muggins. Now, behave yourself nicely before your Uncle Richard! Hope Taylor was glad to see you?"

"I guess he was. Why?"

"Oh, you needn't be so bally secretive about it," grinned Trevor. "Don't you think I know that you went to call him down for not showing up to-day?"

"You seem to know a good deal," answered Dick, non-committingly.

Trevor nodded vigorously.

"I do; I'm what you fellows call 'right smart.' I hope you gave it to him straight from the shoulder." And after a pause, in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, "I don't like that chap a little bit!"

"I gathered as much," laughed Dick. "Beck was pretty huffy at him this afternoon."

"I don't wonder. Just fancy, the beggar doesn't show up half the time, while the rest of us poor dubs sit there and slave at those bally machines until our arms are pulled out of shape. I know mine are at least six inches longer than they were a month ago."

"How did you get on to-day?"

"Fairly well, I fancy. Only it takes a long time to get used to your style of rowing. You see, it's rather different from ours."

"Is it? Perhaps you're not aware that we are supposed to row the English stroke?" Trevor raised his eyebrows.

"The dickens you say? Well, I can't see much resemblance, Dick. Why, you haven't any body-swing; you make a chap's legs do it all!"

"Do we? Well, you must mention that to Kirk next Saturday; I dare say he'll be glad to hear about it."

"Rot; I'm not finding fault; any old stroke will do me;

I'm just saying that there's a difference between the stroke that Beck and you teach and the English stroke that I've seen. Maybe yours is the better of the two. Here we are, Muggins. Now, be a good doggy until I see you again; and don't pull any more blankets off the table, or Jim will lay it onto you with a strap."

Muggins had by this time grown inured to partings, and so only stood by the office stove and watched them disappear with head on one side and a sort of "Must you go?" expression in his eyes.

"When do we get onto the river?" asked Trevor presently as they retraced their steps down the village street in the teeth of a northwest gale.

"Depends; sometimes in early March, sometimes not until about April. You see, the ice makes it awkward. Kirk has got it into his head that we'll get out early this spring; I don't know whether he's made any arrangements with the weather man."

"He's older than I expected. Last year I was a bit surprised to see what a staid and venerable party he was."

"Well, he's nearly forty, though I don't suppose that's exactly old—when you get used to it; they get even older, I'm told. But Kirk knows a good deal about rowing, and he has turned out some dandy crews, both here and at Harwell. When he was at school here he was captain of the eight in his upper middle and senior years, and at college he rowed four in his class crew the first year, went into the

varsity boat the next, and stayed there until he graduated; he was captain in his senior year. Then he coached them for a while. This is his fourth year with us, and we've beaten St. Eustace twice and been beaten once in that time; and we'll beat her again next June."

"I hope so," said Trevor, "only I can't see why every one seems so half-hearted about it. I don't mean you or Beck," he explained hurriedly, "but the fellows as a rule; they don't seem to care much about it."

"I know; but part of that is just—just put on, assumed, Trevor; when the crews get on the water it will be different. But, just the same," he owned sorrowfully, "there is an unusual lack of rowing spirit among the fellows this year. I dare say it will happen that way now and then. Only I wish it hadn't happened this year," he added ruefully.

"So do I, for your sake, old chap," answered Trevor heartily as they climbed to their room.

The head coach put in his appearance on the following Saturday afternoon, despite a heavy snow-storm that well-nigh blocked the roads, and by his brisk, businesslike manners put new life into the first squad, for the moment at least. Malcolm Kirk was a man of medium height, approaching forty years of age, with a good but not exaggerated breadth of chest and shoulder, and very serious and steady black eyes. His manner was usually contained and rather grave, and he possessed a widely noted habit of keeping his own mind and every one else's fixed firmly

for the time on the matter in hand, to the exclusion of all else.

As an example of this, it was told of him that once, while coaching a college crew in a barge, he was lecturing a man in the waist on the subject of dropping the hands, when the barge struck a snag which ripped a hole in her. "You don't get your oar out of the water clean, Four," remonstrated the coach. "Drop the forearm as well as the hands." The barge was by this time awash. "We've ripped a hole in the skin, sir," called the coxswain. "Eh? Very careless," answered the coach from the bow of the launch. "There, Four, that's better. Now make your wrist turn sharper. Keep it up, keep it up; you're doing better!" And the eight rowed the half-filled barge an eighth of a mile before Kirk was quite satisfied with the unfortunate Four's work, and allowed the men to come out.

To-day the first thing he noted was the presence of a new fellow at seven.

"Where's that man Taylor?" he asked of Dick.

"He's stopped training, Mr. Kirk; says he can't keep up with his studies." Kirk stared.

"Nonsense, we must have him back; tell him so, Hope. Now, Six, that won't do; don't meet the oar that way, take it back to you; finish hard and full. Bow, you begin to slide forward too soon; start your swing first and let it carry the slide with it. Three, you're doing better to-day. Keep

the leg-power up to the last moment; knees down firm at the end of the stroke." And Trevor, tugging heroically, hears, and begins to think that perhaps he *will* learn the stroke eventually, after all!

When work was over Kirk again brought up the subject of Taylor. "Yes, we must have him back, Hope; tell him so; make him understand that it's necessary. He's a good oar; fits into his place well; has lots of weight where he needs it."

"I'm afraid he won't come back," answered Dick. "He's got it into his head that he can't go in for rowing and pass his exams."

"Pooh! never mind what he's got into his head; tell him we need him in the boat; make him understand that it's his duty, Hope. And I tell you we *do* need him, my boy; never saw such an unpromising lot of fellows at Hillton. That man you had at seven to-day couldn't fill the place in the boat; he's too light; don't think he has the grit for it, even if he learned to put some power into his stroke, which he doesn't at present. You've got a good man at bow; what's his name? Shield? Well, he's promising. And Three, I like Three's looks; seems to be in earnest, though he has a deuce of a queer way of throwing his body around the boat."

"That's Nesbitt," explained Dick. "He's English, and has rowed some at home; I believe he finds our stroke rather difficult; but I think he'll do well; he's my room-

mate, and I know that he's the sort of fellow that'll keep on trying until he gets what he's after."

Kirk nodded approvingly.

"I shouldn't wonder. English, eh? That explains that body-swing of his, I suppose. Well, I guess he'll turn out well, though I believe he'll do better at four when we get into the water. Now, I'll have a look at the other squad."

"It's all very well for Kirk to talk about making Taylor come back," said Dick to himself that evening, "but I wish he had it to do. However, I suppose I'll have to make a stab at it. But I'd rather have a tooth pulled. We do need him, though, and that's a fact, and what I've got to do is forget what I like and don't like, and work for the crew. I'll go around and see him to-morrow. No, by Jove, I'll go to-night; there's no time like the present for anything disagreeable!" And he jumped up, threw aside his book, and began to struggle into his coat. Trevor glanced up in surprise.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"Over to the village to see Taylor."

"Phew! what a growl; want me to go along?"

"No, not unless you want to sit on the steps and wait for me; I've got to see him about something private."

Trevor grinned.

"Fancy, now! Honest, Dick, if you're going to punch his head, I'd like blooming well to help you."

"I dare say," laughed his roommate, "but I'm not going to punch his head. Coming along?"

"And sit on the front doorstep in this weather and twiddle my thumbs? I fancy not, my dear. As the vulgar manner of speech hath it, 'Guess again!'" And Trevor snuggled up ostentatiously to the warmth of the blaze. But after Dick had taken his departure he laid down his book and eyed the flames thoughtfully.

"I rather wish I had gone along," he muttered. "It's just possible that he is going to punch Taylor, after all."

CHAPTER XVI

A DECLARATION OF WAR

Dick was lucky enough to find Roy Taylor at home, huddled close to the fireplace, and evidently busy with his studies. His welcome to-night was less suave than on the occasion of Dick's previous visit. His greeting was almost impolite, and Dick, who on his way from the yard had resolved to keep his temper no matter what happened, already felt his anger rising.

"I came to see you about crew work, Taylor," he began. "In the first place we need you in the boat; in the second place we've got to have you."

"My dear chap——" began Taylor in bored tones.

"No, wait a minute," interrupted Dick. "Let me have my say. You've left us in a hole. It would have been better if you hadn't started training at all; better than letting me think you were going to row and then backing down in this way; as I say, it leaves us in a hole. Besides that, it's not—not patriotic. You know what a hard time we've got ahead of us; you know that we've got to have good material if we are to win out from St. Eustace; and

you know that when you cut rowing you're doing about all in your power to get us beaten."

Taylor flushed angrily.

"That's tommyrot!"

"No, it isn't; it's the truth; you know it is, Taylor. And you know very well that if the fellows learned it you couldn't stay here."

"Well, on my word!" ejaculated Taylor; "you've got a lot of cheek to sit there and—and throw insults at me. You must be crazy!"

"I don't think so; and I'm not insulting you, at least not intentionally. But I am telling what's so. You've taken about the meanest course in the matter you could, and all the school would say so if they knew."

"I suppose that's a threat," sneered Taylor.

"No, it isn't. I have no intention——"

"But let me tell you that I don't care a fig for all your nasty insinuations, Hope; you can tell all the lies about me you want to. I don't believe that the fellows will call it dishonest for a chap to give up crew work because he finds that he can't do justice to his studies; I don't believe that they will call it mean. I tell you, Hope, you crew and football and baseball beggars have got a false notion of school life; you think that all a chap comes here for is to row in your dirty old boat, or mess round with a football; that study is a secondary consideration. But it's not that way, by ginger; no, sir; that's where you are off!"

A declaration of war.

"That's nonsense," replied Dick calmly. "And you know well enough that I don't think any such thing, nor do any of the fellows here. What I do think is that the average fellow can do his studies and take part in sports and be all the better for it. Look at the Honor Men of last year; look——"

"I don't care a fig for the Honor Men of last year. What I say——"

"Taylor, when you tell me that you've chucked rowing because you can't keep up with your studies you're saying what isn't so," cried Dick.

"Oh!" Taylor glared with an ugly expression in his eyes. "Oh, is that so? Maybe you know all about my affairs—better than I do, perhaps?"

"I know that much," answered Dick, striving to speak calmly. "I know that the reason you've left the crew is because you want to do all you can to prevent me from turning out a winning eight. And I know you want to do that because you have a grudge against me for beating you last spring for the captaincy. I know that much, Taylor, and I want you to know that I know it. We might as well understand each other right here and now."

Taylor's snarl died away, and he grinned mockingly across at Dick.

"All right, my smart friend. Supposing that is so? Mind, I don't say that it is so; but supposing it is, what are you going to do about it?"

Dick hesitated for an instant and the grin on Taylor's face widened as he saw it.

"Perhaps you're going to tell that yarn to the fellows?"

"No," answered Dick; "I've thought of that, but I'm no tell-tale; and, besides, it wouldn't do any good. It might make things unpleasant for you——"

"If any one believed it," sneered Taylor.

"But it wouldn't better the crew any. And that's all I care about, Taylor. I'm captain this year, and I'm going to turn out a good crew; I'm going to do it in spite of you or anything you can do!"

"Dear me, dear me, you ought to go into melodrama, Hope; you'd make a hit, really you would." Then his manner changed suddenly, and he leaned forward toward the other, scowling darkly. "Look here, I don't mind telling the truth, Hope, to you; I'm not afraid of anything you can do. You're right about the captaincy; you're right about the grudge, if you care to call it that. Let me tell you: This is my last year here. I'm not going up to college like you; I mean a college where they have rowing; I'm going to Tech. Ever since I came here I've wanted to be captain—for one year if no more; that's been my—my ambition, if you like; I'd set my heart on it. I went into rowing when I was a junior; made a place. The next year I went into the varsity boat. The next year I hoped to be captain, but I missed it; Brown won it, hang him!

Last spring I thought I had it at last; there was no reason why I shouldn't have had it; I'm a good oar, as good as there was in the last year's varsity; I'm old enough; and I'm a senior. But no, you had to spoil it; you were popular with the crew, more popular than I was; and you had Beck with you. If it hadn't been for Beck I'd have made it, I know; but he wanted you to have it."

"Beck had no part in the election," said Dick.

"He didn't attend it and he had no vote, but don't you suppose the fellows knew what he wanted? Of course they did; they were willing to please Beck; and so they chose you captain. And that's why I've no love for you. I've worked all the fall and all the winter, so far, to keep the fellows from joining the crews; and I've succeeded, too; and I'm going to keep on unless——" He paused and dropped his gaze from Dick's face for an instant.

"I see," said Dick, with traces of wonderment in his voice. "But what—what does it all lead to? You may bring defeat to Hillton, but how will that better things? You wanted the captaincy; I can understand that; I—I think I'm sorry you were disappointed——"

"Cut it out!" growled Taylor.

"But it's too late now, isn't it? Haven't you made trouble enough? As far as I'm concerned personally I don't care a row of buttons whether you have it in for me or not, but what's the use in taking your spite out on the whole school?"

"Maybe it isn't too late," answered Taylor, smiling oddly. "You see, I know pretty well what sort of a chap you are; you're one of those conscientious dubs; you'd do all kinds of stunts and be tickled to death if you thought you were helping the school. And you're honest all through; if you lied to any one—even yourself—you'd go off into a corner somewhere and throw a fit! I've taken all that into consideration."

"Drop that," said Dick stiffly, "and say what you mean."

"All right. Look here; do you want Hillton to win the race? Very well; and do you think she can do it with the material she's got now?"

"Yes, I do."

"Oh, no you don't; and if you do you're mightily mistaken. I said a while ago that you'd find a man for my place at seven, but you won't; there isn't one to be found; there isn't a fellow that's heavy enough for it. I know; I've watched what's going on, and I know who you've got. And you'll lose other men before long; I've fixed that. Now, listen; there's just one way you can turn out a crew that will run away from St. Eustace: that's by getting me back into the boat, keeping all the experienced fellows you've got, and getting one or two good men that will only go in for crew work when I ask them to."

Taylor paused and smiled triumphantly. Dick clenched his hands, fighting down an almost overpowering impulse

to leap across the width of the hearth, and—yes, as Trevor had suggested—punch Taylor's head!

"That makes you mad, eh?" grinned his host.

"What are you driving at?" cried Dick angrily. "If you've got anything to say, say it and get done."

"Well, I've got an offer to make," replied Taylor softly. "I'll go back to work and bring three, possibly four, good fellows with me, and do all I can for the success of the crew, if——"

"If what?"

"If you'll resign from the captaincy."

Dick stared at the other for a moment in speechless amaze. For the first time a full understanding of Taylor's conspiracy came to him; but even then he could scarcely believe that the other was in earnest.

"But—how would that help you?" he gasped.

"I should get the captaincy, because according to the bargain you would promise to do all you could to help me get it. Well, what do you say?"

Dick jumped up and stared angrily at the other's smiling, imperturbable face.

"I say no! I say you're a mean, contemptible scoundrel, Taylor. And I've heard enough; you make me sick!" He buttoned his coat with fingers that trembled despite him, and strode to the door. Taylor's face was flushed, and he arose and took a step after him. Then he stopped and, seemingly with an effort, laughed harshly.

"I thought you'd refuse at first," he said. "There's no hurry; think it over. You'll consent in the end because"—he raised his voice, for Dick was already in the hall—"because it's the only way you can make sure of success for the crew."

Dick strode down the stairs without replying, and plunged into the darkness toward the academy, striding along as though shod in seven-league boots, in an unconscious effort to escape from the fury that possessed him. At the gate leading into the yard he paused breathlessly, looked about him, and laughed shortly.

"And I started out with the resolve to keep my temper!" he sighed.

As he reached the head of the stairs the sound of a voice, even-toned, monotonous, met his ears, and as he approached Number 16 he discovered that it issued from that study. He paused outside the door and listened; Trevor was apparently translating aloud:

"'The hippopotamus is esteemed sacred in the Papremis district, but in no other part of Egypt. I shall describe its nature and properties. It has four feet, which are cloven—like the devil's—or like an ox's; the nose is short and tip-tilted—like Trevor Nesbitt's—and the teeth are prominent—like Professor Sharp's; it resembles a horse in its mane——'"

"Excellent, Nesbitt, excellent," said a deep voice, for all the world like Professor Garrison's. "Hence, gentle-

men, we have the saying 'Remember the Mane.' Proceed, Nesbitt."

"'It resembles a horse in its mane, its tail, and its voice; it is of the size of a big ox, and has an epidermis—otherwise, and in vulgar parlance, a skin—so remarkably thick that when dry it becomes very offensive.'" The monotonous voice paused; apparently the rendering of the latter portion of the narrative was not quite satisfactory. But the second occupant of the study was evidently lenient, for the deep voice said:

"Proceed, Nesbitt; that is correct."

"He's reading Herodotus," said Dick to himself. "But who in thunder is that with him?"

"'The Nile,'" continued Trevor, "'also produces otters, which Egyptians venerate, as they do also the fish named lepidotus—so called on account of its spots, which resemble those of a leopard—and the eel; these are sacred to the Nile, as among birds is one named chenalopex.' What is that, professor?"

"The chenalopex," responded the deep voice, "is a bird——"

But Dick's curiosity got the better of him at this point, and he opened the door and entered. At the study table was Trevor, Dick's volume of Herodotus open before him, and a Greek lexicon at his elbow. Dick stared about the room in surprise. Save for Trevor and himself it was empty.

"What in thunder——" he began.

"Hope," said Trevor, pointing a paper-knife at him in the manner of Professor Garrison, and speaking sternly in deep tones, "take your seat, sir. The habit of tardiness appears to be growing upon you, sir. Pattern your conduct upon that of the excellently punctual Nesbitt."

Dick seized Trevor's head and rubbed his nose violently into Herodotus. "You silly chump, you! What do you think you're doing?"

"Amusing myself, I fancy. What can a chap do when his roommate goes off and leaves him this way?" He struck the paper-knife against the green shade of the drop-light. "Beg pardon, professor, I believe the bell rang." Then, in the professor's voice, "The bell, Nesbitt? Ah, the time passes very quickly when deep in the beautiful utterances of Herodotus. We will begin to-morrow where we leave off this morning, at the seventy-first paragraph." Trevor slammed the book shut, jumped up, and grinned at Dick.

"You'd better be learning your own lessons than mine," laughed the latter. "And, now that Professor Garrison's gone, I propose to go to bed."

Long after the light was out Trevor sat up suddenly and asked:

"I say, Dick, did you thump Taylor?"

"No," was the drowsy answer. Trevor snuggled back under the clothes, grumbling.

"What do you expect to amount to when you grow up," he asked disgustedly, "if you continue to neglect your opportunities in this way?"

The next day Waters, rowing at five in the first squad, informed Dick that, because of not having enough time for his studies, he had decided to stop work with the crew.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE BOAT

When, on the following Saturday, Coach Kirk again visited Hillton, Dick had a sorry report to make: Taylor obdurate; Waters gone; two members of the second squad ill.

"Taylor absolutely refuses, eh?" said the coach, studying Dick's face. "Well, if he won't he won't, and we must do our best without him. And Waters has dropped out, too, you say? He was at five, wasn't he? Well, that's another good man lost. You've tried to persuade him to come back?"

"Yes; I did all I could."

"Ah! Is Waters a particular friend of Taylor's?"

"I think they're rather chummy."

"I see. Well, Hope, I can't pass behind you in this matter; it's your business to look after the fellows, and if you can't get them to stay in training, that ends it. We must do the best we can with what we've got. We'll try Nesbitt at four to-day, and put Rankin of the second squad into Waters's place. And, by the way, we'd better divide the second; make a third squad. That will leave two over,

won't it? Two men, I mean? I thought so. I wish to goodness we had a second set of machines here. However—— By the way, Hope, you're not looking very fit to-day; feel pretty well, do you?"

"Yes; I'm all right; didn't sleep very steady last night, I guess."

"Well, you'll have to look after yourself carefully. If you go off your feed we *will* be in a hole. Now I want to see Beck a minute or two before we start to rowing." And Kirk strode out onto the floor, and as he went he said to himself: "Plain as daylight; Hope and Taylor are at loggerheads, and Taylor's persuaded Waters to leave. Nice state of affairs!"

February passed into March, and March, after performing its usual æolian repertoire, subsided toward the end of its reign in preparation for a lamblike exit. And one morning Dick pushed up the blind and, according to his custom of weeks past, looked toward the river. And, lo, the water sparkled deeply blue under a springlike sun, and, save for a patch here and there along the margins and in the lee of the islands, was clear of ice.

"The river's open at last!" he shouted to Trevor. And that youth hurried to the window to see the marvel with his own eyes.

"Good work! I say, Dick, it looks warm enough to go in swimming. Will we get out to-day?"

Dick shook his head.

"I guess we'll wait until Saturday."

"Saturday! But, jumping jiminy, this is only Tuesday!" exclaimed Trevor. "How can you expect a chap to grind away in the gym on a day like this?" He pushed the window up and threw himself over the sill, kicking his heels delightedly and breathing in the fresh, moist air greedily. A fringe of icicles above dripped water down onto his bare neck, and he giggled hysterically. "Just like a needle bath," he sputtered.

"Come on and get dressed," said Dick, "and let's go over to breakfast."

"All right; wait until I eat an icicle." He reached up and broke off several. "Have one?"

"No, and no more will you," replied Dick, knocking them out of his hand. "When you're in training for the boat you can't eat icicles; they'll give you pains in your tummy."

"Rot," said Trevor; "there's nothing more healthful than a nice underdone icicle just before breakfast."

The boat-house on the following Saturday afternoon was a scene of much activity and color. The fellows turned out almost to a man for a look at the crews at work, and the second and third squad stood by and watched enviously while their more fortunate friends lifted one of the long cedar shells from the house and placed it in the water at the end of the float. The coxswain, an upper middle lad named Keene, called the numbers, and, one by one, Trevor

by virtue of his place at four, leading, the first squad entered the boat. Kirk contented himself to-day with a point of vantage on the landing, for the tiny naphtha launch was not yet ready for duty.

"Get your feet into the stretchers, men, and see how they feel. How is that, Six, too long? Hold her steady, you fellows. That's better, isn't it?" And when the last stretcher had been placed to suit: "Keene, keep the boat in the stretch here by the landing and inshore as much as you can. All right."

"Get ready," called the coxswain. The boat was pushed off from the float. "Forward!" The crew moved up with their slides. "Paddle!" and the shell floated out into the stream, her bow pointing up the river. "Easy all!" The paddling ceased and the boat lay motionless. "Forward!" The eight bodies bent. "Are you ready? Row!" and the blades swirled through the water and the boat leaped forward. Dick, at stroke, pulled leisurely, and after the first three or four strokes the rest of the eight caught the time, and the locks clicked in unison. At a little distance up-stream the boat was turned, and, with the same long, leisurely stroke, was brought back and past the landing, where Kirk, eagle-eyed, watched the work silently. Down-stream the shell was again turned, and, when it was once more opposite the float, was brought to a stop.

"Seven, keep your eyes in the boat and watch the

stroke," called Kirk. "Five, you're too late every time. Four, you don't finish out. Bring your hands home. Two, keep your shoulders down at the finish. Cox, watch the boat; coming down just now she rolled like a log; keep an eye on Three and Bow; I think they're the offenders. Try it again."

And off went the boat once more, turned, passed the landing, and finally was again brought up that the coach might continue his criticism. Then the first squad was released and the second was given a few minutes instruction in watermanship, merely taking their places in the boat, handling the oars and paddling to and fro about the float. The third squad followed, and as each was released it was sent off for a run.

Among the fellows who watched the work of the crews that afternoon was Roy Taylor. It would, perhaps, be more truthful to say that he divided his watching between the crew and the coach. And from the latter he learned as much as from the former, and what he saw was evidently to his liking, for he went off up the steps whistling thoughtfully but with satisfaction.

"I'll give Hope another three weeks to come around," he said to himself, as he passed Society House and turned toward Academy Building. "If by that time he hasn't consented to give me the captaincy, I'll—I'll eat my hat. I never saw such a duffer in a boat as that fellow they had to-day in my place at seven. And Kirk thinks the same

way, too; he tried to hide what he felt, but I know his way of tugging at his mustache and grinning pleasantly when he is worried; and he was worried to-day, all right. And I don't blame him"—with a grin—"for there are three men in that first squad that wouldn't last half a mile in a race with a girls' school! Oh, yes, I guess old Hope will be around to see me before long!"

And Taylor pushed his way past the green leather doors of the library and, finding a book, went busily to work with pad and pencil—for whatever else might have been said about Roy Taylor, he was at least diligent at his studies, and stood high in his class.

Dick, followed by Trevor and the rest of the first squad, finished a mile run over the soft road, and came swinging up to the gymnasium an hour before supper-time, panting and tuckered, but in a most enjoyable glow and with appetites that protested strongly against the time that must elapse ere they could be satisfied. After a shower-bath Dick and Trevor walked across to Masters together, and, pulling a blanket over their feet, perched themselves on the broad window-seat in the lingering glow of the sun, and leaned back luxuriously against the pillows. Ever since the morning four days previous, when Dick had looked out to find the Hudson clear of ice, the boys had scorned fires, and, although the room had a way of getting cold toward evening, they insisted that spring had come, and that wood fires were a survival of the dark ages of midwinter. Tre-

vor stretched his arms and yawned, and the Latin book on his lap fell unheeded to the floor.

"That was something like, to-day," he said. "It was worth all that work in the gym, every minute of it. I say, Dick, Kirk looked rather well satisfied with us, I thought, eh?"

"He looked that way," answered Dick, "but don't deceive yourself into thinking that he felt so. Not a bit of it; he was grumpy clean through; you could tell that by his grin; he always grins when he's grumpy; makes you think of the—thingumbob—what is it that cries when it eats people?"

"Mouse?" asked Trevor innocently.

"Get out! Crocodile, I mean. That's Kirk's way. No, he wasn't happy to-day, and I don't blame him, for, oh, Trevor, my child, Jones fills Taylor's place about as well as a wax doll would. And Rankin means well, but hasn't got it in him, and Arnold's just a makeshift, after all; I thought he was going to prove a good man; and Milton doesn't seem to understand what he's doing half the time."

"And Nesbitt rows as though he was chopping wood," laughed Trevor, with a questioning accent.

"Nesbitt will do, I guess, after he's been at it a little longer," answered Dick. "Hang it all! I rowed like a kid to-day myself! I don't know what's got into me. I wish—by Jove! I honestly do wish that Taylor or anybody else was captain, Trevor!"

"Rot! What kind of a captain would Taylor make, for goodness' sake? Cheer up, my hearty; you'll feel better after supper."

"Sha'n't," muttered Dick.

"Oh, yes, you will. What you need is some nice cold roast beef, milk toast, egg muffins, peach marmalade, and a cup of cocoa; with plenty of mustard."

"In the cocoa?" grinned Dick.

"Idiot! No, on the beef. That's right, smile; keep it up; now you're feeling better. And something tells me, Dick, that it's pretty near time to wash our nice little hands and faces. Say, let's cut lessons to-night and go over to the village and see Carl and Stewart, eh?"

And so it was agreed.

Spring vacation came, and for a week partially depopulated the academy, interfering sadly with crew work. Trevor joined his father in New York, and Stewart Earle went home; but Dick and Carl stuck to their posts, Dick on the river and Carl on the baseball diamond, where he was turning out a nine that was destined to be proudly remembered at Hillton for many years. Dick found himself in full authority during the vacation week, for Malcolm Kirk had not as yet taken up his residence in the village, and with no recitations to attend he was able to give almost his entire time to rowing affairs. Half of the first squad were away, but he filled the empty places from the second, put Crocker temporarily at stroke, and coached

the impromptu crew from a small boat in which he rowed frantically about in efforts to secure satisfactory points of observation. One rather bleak afternoon he was in his tub just off the landing as the shell, returning from down the river, swept abreast of him. He stood up on the thwarts, balancing himself with an oar, in order to better view the work.

"Seven, you're rowing light," he called. "You begin to lower your hands too early; your blade is half out of water at the finish. Five, you put your blade too deep." The shell was passing now, and he raised his voice and unconsciously leaned forward. "Grip the water with the blade——"

There was a splash and a cry from the handful of loiterers on the float; the tub rocked merrily; Dick's cap floated off down-stream, and Dick had disappeared from sight.

"Hold hard all!" yelled the cox. Then, "Back all!" But ere the shell had lost way enough to allow of its being paddled to the rescue, Dick had reappeared a few yards down-stream, had made hand over hand for his boat, and was clinging to the side, wiping the water from his face.

"At an angle!" he shouted, continuing his instructions as though no interruption had occurred, "and then you won't be likely to 'slice.' Take 'em along, Keene; and, Stroke, lengthen out a bit!"

Amid the laughter of the onlookers the shell swept on

again up the river, and Dick crawled over the bow of his tub and put back to the boat-house for a change of clothing.

But despite his most heroic efforts, neither the first nor second squad worked well; there appeared to be lack of spirit; a sort of "What's the good of anything? Nothing!" feeling seemed to prevail among the candidates, and the discouragement that had been growing on Dick ever since Taylor's resignation now took possession of him wholly. If Trevor had been there, he told himself, it wouldn't have been so bad; he would have had some one to whom to confide his troubles; some one that would have listened patiently to his groans and growls, and who, by his unfailing cheerfulness and good nature, would have won him from his "blues." He missed Trevor a good deal; in the evenings especially the study seemed lonesome, and with none to talk to, Dick could gain no entertainment from books, but gathered his lists and memoranda of crew men before him and pondered and studied over them until bedtime came and he crawled between the covers fagged and low-spirited.

In the St. Eustace Academy paper he read glowing accounts of the Blue's eight that worried him yet more. Fifty-odd candidates had reported there for work shortly after the beginning of the new year; a spirit of enthusiasm reigned over the entire student body; the coach who had piloted the eight to a victory over Hillton the preceding

spring had again taken hold, and the most encouraging prospect stretched before the rival school. With a groan he contrasted those conditions with the conditions which prevailed at Hillton; almost total indifference on the part of the school at large; a woful deficiency in candidates, both as to numbers and quality; a financial state which, while robust enough to supply the absolute necessities of the crews, was too slight to afford any of the extra expenditures that might in the struggle for success smooth the path toward victory; and, last of all, but not least, intestine strife.

On one occasion, heartily wearied of his own company, Dick slammed the door of Number 16 and plodded over the muddy roads to Carl Gray's room in the village. Carl's welcome was enthusiastic enough, but to Dick, with his own troubles everlastingly revolving themselves in his brain, the other lad's chatter of baseball problems—none of them, Dick thought, weighty enough to cause a moment's worry—only bored him; and he left early and made his way back to Masters and bed envious of Carl's good fortune and more down on his luck than before.

Vacation came to an end in the early April days, and Trevor and the rest of the fellows returned to school, brightened and cheered in mind and body. Kirk also arrived, bag and baggage, and took up his quarters in the village, and Dick, with feelings of relief, mentally shoved a portion of his load of troubles onto the broad shoulders

of the head coach. Trevor viewed Dick's appearance with alarm.

"What in the name of all that's silly have you been doing to yourself?" he demanded. "You look like a brass farthing of an old and rare vintage! Been ill?"

"No," answered Dick. And then, acting on a sudden impulse, an overpowering desire for a confidant, he told Trevor everything; of Taylor's desertion and Waters's; of his fears for crew success; and finally of Taylor's demands, ending with: "And I've decided to do it; I'm going to resign the captaincy and give him what he wants; I'm tired to death of the whole silly business!"

"Oh, don't talk so sick!" cried Trevor in angry disgust. "You'll resign nothing! I—I'd see Taylor at the bottom of the river before I'd come to terms with him! Give him the captaincy, indeed! Now, you get that notion out of your head, Dick, or I'll—I'll——"

"It's all well enough for you to talk that way," grumbled Dick, letting his discouragement have full sway and gaining not a little comfort thereby, "but I tell you things have come to a pass where something's got to be done! We haven't any crew; they're just a boatful of chumps; they don't care a fig whether they ever learn to row! And look at the rest of the fellows! They don't care, either; they'd just as lief see Hillton beaten as not!"

"Rot!" ejaculated Trevor. "Of course they care. I'll own they're blooming chilly about it, but it's because they

don't know what's going on. And, look here, Dick, you've got no earthly right to resign from the captaincy for such a reason as that; if the fellows had wanted Roy Taylor for captain they'd have elected him. But they didn't; they wanted you; so they elected you; and, by ginger, you've got to carry the thing through!"

"Much the fellows care!"

"And, look here, now, Dick, honestly, what kind of a fool captain would Taylor make?"

"As good as I, I dare say. He knows how to row——"

"That's nothing; that doesn't always fit a man to boss a lot of other men; a good captain's got to know more than just how to row. He's got to have grit, and patience, and generalship, and he's got to be a fellow that the other fellows will look up to and believe in and obey; and that's not Roy Taylor, not by a jugful, my angel child!"

"Well," began Dick less dolefully.

"Well, don't you go to doing anything foolish. Cheer up; take a rest; let the crew go hang for a few days."

"Can't do that," answered Dick. "Wish I could."

"Well, anyhow, Dick, stop thinking about your troubles, like a good fellow. And, if you won't give up this bally resignation idea, why, promise not to do anything about it for—let me see—for two weeks; will you?"

And Dick grinned a trifle sheepishly and promised.

CHAPTER XVIII

DICK SURRENDERS

"Stroke side, catch the beginning sharper; the boat rolls down on the bow oars. Bow side, keep your hands up! That's better! Steady now, all; don't rush forward. Keep your swing long; you're all rowing too short in the water! . . . Every man keep his eyes in the boat. Watch the man in front of you and follow his movements; make a machine of yourself! . . . You're out of time again! Listen for the rattle of the locks. There ought to be but one sound, and I can hear at least five. Use your ears, men! . . . Stroke, lengthen out, lengthen out; you're much too short!"

And Malcolm Kirk, standing in the bow of the little naphtha launch Terrible, took his megaphone from his mouth and motioned to the man in charge. The Terrible swung around in a short swirl of blue water and headed down-stream, waiting for the shell to make its long turn above. Across the sun-kissed wavelets came the sound of the coxswain's voice:

"Easy all! . . . Three and Bow, paddle. Stroke and Six, back water! . . . Forward! . . . Are you ready?

. . . Row!" Then down the river came the boat, looking for all the world like an enormous water-bug, its eight long legs treading the bosom of the river in unison, or at least in unison so far as the ordinary observer would have been able to judge, but not at all satisfactory in that respect to the motionless figure on the launch. The eight backs bent together and the boat sped past the Terrible, which instantly *puff-puffed* impatiently and started in pursuit, taking up a position off Number Two.

"Stroke, you're still too short," began the coach all over again. "Keep it low and long! . . . Seven, you bend your arms too soon; swing back with them perfectly straight; remember, you can't make them do your work; hard against the stretcher, now! . . . That's a bit better. . . . Six, you start your slide too soon; I've spoken to you of that often enough. Get your whole body-weight well onto the stroke before you drive your slide away. . . . Sit up, Five! Ram that slide back to the limit! . . . Four, your body's falling out of the boat! Keep your outside leg and hand firm! . . . Three, drop your hands more so as to get your oar out of the water clean. . . . That's vastly better! . . . Two, you're too slow with your hands and too quick with your body. Shoot your hands away lively and turn your inside wrist sharply; then follow with the body more slowly. . . . Bow, you're rolling the boat again! Catch the water more sharply! . . . Time! Time! Listen for the rattle of the oars in the locks, men; you're

beastly ragged! . . . Stroke, you're rowing light again! Keep your hands up to the end!"

And so on for another half mile, when the boat was again turned and brought back to the landing, where the second squad were embarking under the direction of its coxswain. "Let her run!" cried Keene, and the first squad lifted their dripping oars from the water and the shell approached the float silently, easily. "Touch her a bit, Stroke." Dick's oar went back into the water and he paddled gently until the boat's head was brought nearer to the landing. "Easy, Stroke. Mind your oars, bow side!" Then the shell floated alongside, was seized by those on the float, and the oars were unlocked. "Stroke! . . . Bow! . . . Seven! . . . Two! . . . Six! . . . Three! . . . Five! . . . Four!" called the coxswain, and one by one the crew stepped out. Then the shell was lifted, dripping and shining from the water, and borne into the house. The second squad had meanwhile paddled into the stream, and their troubles had begun. Down the river they went, followed by the inexorable Kirk and the puffing Terrible.

Dick, weary, out of tune with himself for his sorry work, led the first squad off on a short run, down the river-path to the campus, across the golf links, still too soft for good running, and back by Academy Road toward the gymnasium, to baths and rest. And as he trotted along the voice of the coach echoed continuously in his ears: "*Stroke, you're rowing light again!*" Anger at his own miserable

performance in the boat and an intense loathing for it all seized upon him. Taylor could have the job, and welcome! He felt a downright hate of the fellows behind him because they had witnessed his degradation. What could they think, he asked himself, of a captain who had been cautioned four times for the same fault in a half-hour's work? How could they—what had been Trevor's words? Look up? Yes—how could they look up to such a captain? Hang them! What did he care what they thought of him? A pack of selfish, half-hearted idiots, they were! But in the next moment he acknowledged that he did care—a good deal. And with that the squad reached the gymnasium, and Dick pulled himself wearily up the steps. On the way across the yard later he encountered Keene.

"Hope, Kirk asked me to tell you he'd like to have you go over to his room this evening after supper if you can. I was on my way to your room."

"All right; I'll go. I say, Keene, what did you think of us to-day?"

One of the coxswain's virtues was a fondness for plain, direct language unadorned with verbiage.

"Rotten!" he answered earnestly. Dick nodded, made a pathetic effort at a smile, and strode on. Keene watched him thoughtfully until he disappeared into Masters Hall, then he turned and went on his way. "He won't last until the race," he muttered. "Rowed like a farmer to-day, and looks now as though tired out."

Directly after supper Dick walked to the village and found Malcolm Kirk in his room at Hutchins's boarding-house. He was seated before an open window, his feet on the sill, puffing voluminously at a brier pipe. Upon Dick's advent he greeted him smilingly and pushed forward an armchair.

"Sit down, Hope. It was very good of you to come over. I might have done the journeying myself and called on you, but I thought we'd have a better chance of a talk here in my diggings. Rather an off-day, wasn't it?"

"Yes." Dick relapsed into silence after this monosyllabic reply, and Kirk occupied himself with his pipe for a moment. Then he faced Dick, with a return to his usual grave aspect.

"Hope, you're not looking well. I want you to lay off for a week. You're stale; I could see that by your work to-day, and your face tells as much now. We can't risk you getting laid up, you know."

"I feel pretty well," answered Dick. "But I don't blame you for thinking I'm stale after the exhibition I made to-day," he added bitterly. "I don't know what got into me; I rowed like a—like a chump!"

"Well, don't let that trouble you," replied Kirk, soothingly. "It's bound to happen once in a while; I never saw a crew captain yet that didn't go off his work for a bit at some stage in the game; in fact, I should be rather afraid of one that didn't; I should think he was like the Sunday-

school books—too good to be true. How's your appetite?"

"Pretty fair."

"Sleep well?"

"Not very."

"Why?"

"Because—— Oh, I suppose it's because of the wretched state things are in."

"Crew, you mean?"

Dick nodded.

"Well, affairs don't look bright just at present; I'll acknowledge that, Hope; in fact, it's best to own up to the condition and face it squarely. But that doesn't mean that there's anything to be gained by worrying about it. No, take my advice; do your best, knock off work for a few days, make up your mind that everything's going to come out right in the end, and keep whistling. After all—though I wouldn't say this to any one but you—there's not a particle of disgrace in being beaten, not a particle. I don't want you to imagine that I've got it into my head that we're going to be beaten; for I haven't; I've seen plenty of more hopeless-looking cases than this right themselves when the time came. But what I mean is that it's a poor plan to tell yourself that defeat is disgraceful; if you believe that you'll find yourself in a condition for suicide some day; for every chap, no matter who, has got to face defeat at some time in his life. And the chap that can take

a drubbing and come up smiling is the one that is going to be happiest and going to make the most of his life. The only time when defeat brings disgrace is when you haven't done your honest best. But I didn't ask you over here to listen to a lecture. What do you think of my plan? Will you lay off a while? To-day's Friday; suppose we say until a week from to-morrow?"

"All right," answered Dick dejectedly. "If you think I'd better; though, as far as I'm concerned, I don't think there's any necessity for it."

"Of course you don't; never saw a man who did. But we'll call it a whim of mine, if you like. Well, that's settled. Don't come near the river; don't talk about rowing, and don't even think of it if you can help it; take a walk every day, or a run, and do just enough work at the weights meanwhile to keep your muscles stretchy. Do you think Crocker will be a good man to put in at stroke while you're out of it?"

"Yes," answered Dick. "You know I had him rowing there during vacation; he did first-rate."

"All right. I think we'd better pick the first and second crews next week and send them to training-table. It's rather earlier than last year, but then we're a bit more backward. Now, another thing. That fellow Jones is no earthly use in Taylor's position; in the first place, he's not varsity stuff; in the second place he can't row to any remarkable extent, and there isn't time to start in and teach

him the rudiments of the art at this late day; in short, he's out of the question. And I don't know of any fellow that I care to try there. Do you?"

"Not unless it's Garvier of the second," answered Dick. "He's got the weight and he's hard-working; he pulls a rather good oar, too; only—well, I'm afraid he lacks sand."

Kirk nodded and blew a volume of smoke toward the window.

"I'd thought of Garvier, but your estimate of him is just about mine; as you say, I don't think he's got enough grit for Seven. When you come down to it Seven needs almost as much hard horse-sense, coolness, and judgment as does Stroke. In fact, the style of the crew depends more on him than on Stroke. I believe I'd rather put up with a poor Stroke than a poor Number 7. No, decidedly Garvier won't do. How about Crocker?"

"He might do, of course, only I think he's about where he belongs now, don't you, sir?"

"Yes, I suppose so, although—— Well, there seems to be but one thing to do."

"What's that?" asked Dick.

"Get Taylor back. Now wait a moment, Hope. I don't propose to interfere with you, not a particle."

"I hadn't any such idea," protested Dick.

"All right. What I propose to do is to go with you to see this contrary beggar and make one more appeal to him; and if you say now that you'd rather not ask him

again—for I can well understand your having feeling in the matter—I'll drop the project and say nothing more about it; we'll fight it out without Taylor. On the other hand, if you are willing to try again and don't object to my—well, sticking my finger into your pie, as it were, we'll go together and have it out with him. What do you say?"

Dick hesitated, and Kirk, without appearing to do so, eyed him intently. Kirk, believing that a quarrel existed between the two boys, imagined that Dick was having a struggle with his vanity. "And," Kirk told himself, "I sha'n't blame him if he refuses." But Dick didn't refuse. Knowing upon what terms Taylor would alone consent to return to training, he mentally threw back his shoulders and replied:

"I think there may be a chance of Taylor's having reconsidered. But I think your request would have more weight, and I'd rather that you'd ask him. As for your interfering, I hadn't thought of it; and I shouldn't consider it that, sir. If you like we'll go over and see him now."

"A good idea; no time like the present. Where does he room?"

"At Coolidge's."

"Coolidge's? I guess I don't know that. Is it near here?"

"Well, not very, it's almost the last house in the village, I guess; just beyond the Episcopal Church."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of the walk," returned Kirk. "I was only wondering if it was an old house I'd forgotten. But I think it must be new since my day."

"It is, I guess; looks as though it hadn't been up more than a few years."

Kirk took a walking-stick from a corner, turned down the light, and the two left the house together and proceeded through the village, past the Town Hall, the Eagle Tavern, and the church that Dick had mentioned, until a large square frame house loomed up on their left. Dick led the way upstairs to Taylor's room, and found that youth entertaining Waters and another boy, both of whom, however, took their leave at once. Taylor greeted Dick easily, and the coach respectfully, but was quite evidently far from being at his ease. His first thought was that Dick had confided everything to Kirk, and that there was trouble ahead. But the coach's introduction dispelled that illusion, and he breathed easier.

"Taylor, Hope and I have come to ask your help," announced Kirk, smiling but earnest. "To put the matter in few words, we're in a hard way for a man at Number 7 in the varsity boat, and we want you to reconsider your decision and come back."

It is unnecessary to follow Kirk's argument; he said practically what Dick had said on the occasions of his two previous visits, although he said it all a trifle more forcibly,

and with a suggestion of authority. And when he had finished, Taylor, who seemed greatly impressed, turned toward Dick.

"I hadn't thought of it in just that way, sir," he said, with an assumption of frankness, "and if Hope wants me to return I'll do so."

"Hope's wishes are the same as mine," answered Kirk gravely. "I have acted in the matter only with his full consent."

But Taylor's eyes were still on Dick, and he awaited that youth's reply. Now that the moment had come to relinquish his honors Dick experienced a moment of revolt. He well knew what Taylor's words meant; he was to be held to the terms of the offer made on his last visit. It was hardly fair, to be sure, since, with Kirk present, there was but one reply he could make. But after the first twinge of regret he was glad that it was so; the matter had been settled for him. He would resign the captaincy and Taylor should have it; he would still row in the boat, and, when the success of the crew was at stake, his sacrifice was but little after all. All this passed through his mind in the fraction of a second, and it was with but the slightest hesitation that he met Taylor's look, and smiled across at him. The smile was prompted by relief and not by friendship; but this Kirk could not know, and so was heartily glad to see it; and concluded thereby that the quarrel between the two lads was at an end.

"Yes," said Dick, "I want you to come back. I've never wanted anything else."

"Do you mean that?" questioned Taylor's eyes.

"I do," answered Dick's.

Kirk arose. "That's settled, then, and I'm very glad. I don't think you'll regret it, Taylor. And I'll look for you to-morrow afternoon, shall I?"

"Yes, sir." He accompanied them down to the door courteously, and bade them good-night smilingly from the stoop. When the two reached the street Kirk heaved a sigh of relief.

"That's over with," he muttered.

"Yes," echoed Dick, "it's over."

But Taylor didn't report for crew work on the following afternoon. Instead, a message came saying that he had fallen while coming out of chapel, and had sprained his right knee. And Dick, wistfully watching the distant boat from his window, wondered whether Fate had changed its mind.

CHAPTER XIX

DEFIES THE LAW

Dick strictly obeyed orders. He kept away from the river and contented himself with observing the progress of the crews through a pair of field-glasses from the study as long as the boats were down the river. When they passed up he went across the hall and called on Williams, always popping himself down on the window-seat and always remaining until the first or second boats had once more returned down stream. Williams informed him dryly that he was honored by his visits, but not greatly interested in his conversation, which consisted upon such occasions of monosyllabic replies, usually made with his head half a yard out the window. As far as not thinking of rowing was concerned, it was a downright impossibility; but he did try not to talk about it, and was assisted by Trevor.

"How'd it go to-day?" Dick would ask with elaborate carelessness.

"Don't know," Trevor would grunt.

"Do you think Milton did better?"

"Can't say."

"I noticed you rowed about thirty-four going up."

"Did we?"

"Did you? Don't you know you did? Don't you know anything?" Dick would exclaim in disgust.

"Not on that subject, so shut up!"

The varsity and second crews had been picked and sent to training-table on the Monday following the visit to Taylor. The varsity went to "Mother" Burke's, in the village, and the second had a nice, long table all to themselves in dining-hall. Dick's chair at the head of the board was vacant as yet, by request of Kirk, who explained that if Dick was to keep his mind off rowing affairs the varsity training-table was no place for him. But that was a long week to Dick, and he yearned for Saturday to come, even though, as he acknowledged, the enforced leisure had already benefited him. His color was better, his appetite was coming back, and he slept a good nine hours every night. But nevertheless the inactivity was hard to bear, and he thought that never before had the days lagged so.

The captaincy was still his, for Taylor's accident had afforded him a respite. The boy's knee was in bad shape, Dick learned, and it would be all of a month before he could be fit to take his place in the boat, although it had been agreed between him and Kirk that he should report with the other members of the crew at practice as soon as he was able to get about; he could at least watch the others at work and keep up with the march of events. He had sent a note to Dick the day following his fall.

"Friend Hope," he wrote, "I guess you had best let that matter wait until I'm out-of-doors again. This is beastly luck, but we must make the best of it. Of course you understand that I shall hold you to your promise, so perhaps you had better work around toward you know what; kind of pave the way, you know. Send me an answer by Waters or Hayden."

And Dick had answered "All right."

The evil day was simply postponed, but meanwhile he would go ahead and do what he could. Taylor's agreement had already borne fruit in the shape of the acquisition to the varsity and second boats of Waters and two other oarsmen, all three seniors and experienced men. This had puzzled Kirk not a little, but he decided not to look a gift horse in the mouth, and so said nothing; merely set the new candidates to work and thanked his stars.

When Saturday came, and Dick's period of voluntary probation came to an end, rowing affairs at Hillton looked far more promising. Waters was back at five in the varsity boat, and another of Taylor's disciples, Whitman, had displaced the unfortunate Arnold at Number 2. Crocker went back to his place at six, and Dick once more found himself with his toes in the straps and the stroke oar in his hands, and was greatly comforted. He rowed in his old form that afternoon, and the rest of the crew seemed to gather confidence and tone from him. The new material, despite their lack of training during the first

of the season, fitted well into their places, and the afternoon's practice was, on the whole, decidedly encouraging.

The next morning Dick took his place at the head of the varsity training-table and ate his steak and baked potatoes and eggs with all the relish in the world, and would have been entirely happy had it not been for the knowledge that soon, another week at the most, he must yield his position. It was hard to have performed the difficult part, to have worked and planned ever since the preceding spring, to have worried through discouragements and toiled through the grinding monotony of the preliminary season, only to have to yield the honor to another when things had at length begun to look hopeful. Well, it might mean success in the race; and success was what he desired; only—well, he groaned when he pictured to himself the Crimson crew sweeping over the line ahead of St. Eustace, and realized that not he, but Roy Taylor, would come in for the glory that belonged to a victorious crew captain.

The next evening, Monday, Trevor brought up a copy of The Hilltonian for May, and Dick read aloud the article on the crew. After a summary of rowing at Hillton in former years, the article continued: "With fewer candidates to work with than in any year within memory, and with a lamentable lack of encouragement from the student body, Coach Kirk and Captain Hope have succeeded in forming a varsity and a second crew that compare favorably with any of recent years, and that are superior in

most particulars to the eights of last spring. The return to the varsity squad of Taylor, S., and Whitman, S., is cause for congratulations, as both are excellent oarsmen and have had experience, Taylor in last year's varsity boat, and Whitman in last year's second. The varsity crew as at present made up is as follows: Captain Hope, Stroke; Jones, No. 7; Crocker, No. 6; Waters, No. 5; Nesbitt, No. 4; Milton, No. 3; Whitman, No. 2; Shield, Bow. Taylor will displace Jones at No. 7, it is expected, when he returns to work, which will probably be within the next fortnight.

"It is not surprising that Coach Kirk has selected these men to make up the varsity squad, as they are easily the best oarsmen among the candidates which presented themselves at the commencement of the season. Four of these men rowed in last year's varsity, and of the balance two have had extensive experience in rowing. Coach Kirk says that the present selection is by no means final, and will be changed from time to time as he sees fit. Nevertheless, it is probable that the crew which will row against St. Eustace will be made up practically as above. Beginning next week Coach Kirk will take the men out two by two in a pair-oar, following the practice of last year. The varsity and second squads will have gone to their training-tables by the time this issue of The Hilltonian is published, and with that hard work may be said to have begun. Altogether, rowing affairs at Hillton are in an encouraging condition, and a victory pronounced enough to wipe out the stigma

of last year's defeat at the hands of our rivals may be confidently expected. The progress of the crews will be closely followed by The Hilltonian, and a criticism of the work of the members will appear in our next issue."

"I wish I was as certain of that pronounced victory as he is," said Dick as he laid the sheet aside.

"Who's 'he'?" asked Trevor.

"Singer, I guess; he thinks himself an authority on rowing affairs, though I doubt if he knows an outrigger from a thwart; but he's a good fellow, all the same. Hello, what are you going to do with that?"

Trevor was balancing himself precariously on the head of the couch, and taking a tennis racket from a nail on the wall.

"Going to get busy with it. Stewart and I are to play a bit to-morrow. I rather fancy I'll enter for the tournament in June. I finished rather well in the singles last spring, you know. Carter, a senior chap, beat me in the semi-finals, 6-4, 4-6, 6-3."

"I never played the game but once," answered Dick, "and then I nearly ran myself to death. It was lots harder than a mile on the track."

"Yes, I know; a chap always runs too much when he doesn't know the game. I like it. There isn't much chance for golf this year, and so I fancy I'll go in for tennis."

"Well, good luck to you," replied Dick, "only don't

twist your ankle or anything like that and have to give up rowing."

"Don't you worry," answered his roommate. He had secured the racket and was examining the gut critically. "I fancy I'll need a new one for the tournament," he muttered. Securing an old ball he slammed it around the room for a while, until Dick, laying aside his book, arose in his wrath and took both ball and racket away from him. After that he walked disconsolately around the table for several minutes, and at length settled himself grudgingly to study. Dick had a hard lesson in German to master, and it was well on toward ten o'clock when he finally put down his books, yawned, and strolling to the window, pushed aside the curtains and peered out. Trevor was leisurely undressing in the bedroom when he heard Dick call to him excitedly.

"Fire, Trevor! Come look, quick!"

Trevor came, trailing his trousers after him by one leg, and leaned out beside his chum. Just to the right of Warren Hall, in the direction of the village, shone a ruddy glow, and even as they watched a tongue of flame made itself visible.

"Where is that?" asked Dick. "It's too far that way to be the Eagle."

"Perhaps it's the Episcopal Church," answered Trevor, excitedly. "Let's go!" He struggled madly with his trousers.

"All right, hurry up," said Dick. Then, "By Jove, Trevor, I'll tell you what it is," he called.

"What?" yelled Trevor from the bedroom.

"Why, Watson's stables; they're just about in that direction, and——"

"*What!*" screamed his chum. "Watson's stables! Come on! Hurry!" He dashed toward the door, coatless, hatless, his vest half on.

"Wait for your coat, you idiot!" called Dick. But the other was clattering down the stairs, and so, seizing his own cap and Trevor's, he followed. He caught up with Trevor half-way to the gate. "Here's your cap," he shouted.

"Oh, never mind that," yelled Trevor. "Hurry up! Think of poor old Muggins!"

"By Jove!" muttered Dick. "I'd forgotten him!" And he raced after. As they left the grounds the bell in Academy Building began to ring the alarm, while from the village other bells had already begun their note of warning. The fire was hidden from their view now, but a rosy glare in the sky above the trees and intervening buildings told them that it still raged. Opposite the post-office they overtook a group of men. "Know where it is?" asked Trevor. But they didn't, and the two boys sped on, soon leaving them behind. But when they turned to pass the Town Hall Trevor gave a cry of joy:

"It isn't the stables! It isn't the stables, Dick!" And

he was right; the fire was beyond them and more to the left. "By Jove," he went on, "I believe it's the church after all, or else—— What's beyond that?"

"Beyond the church?" panted Dick. "Why, I don't know; nothing except Coolidge's, I guess. Do you suppose it's that?"

"Must be," answered Trevor. And then they turned aside as the volunteer fire department, with a rabble of curious men and boys following, rattled by. And now they could see plainly the squat tower of the Episcopal Church standing out boldly against the yellow glare.

"It *is* Coolidge's!" cried Dick and Trevor in a breath, and ran yet faster. When they reached the great, square boarding-house they found it surrounded by a crowd of persons, many of them Hillton boys who lived in the village. The frame building was burning merrily, and the flames had advanced to such a stage that it appeared doubtful if the firemen could do much. But two lines of hose were stretched and the pumps were manned, and the volunteer department attacked the enemy valiantly. The entire right corner of the house was ablaze from cellar to mansard roof, the flames having gained undisputed sway of the three big rooms there. The hall, as the boys could see from their position near the front gate, was black with smoke which poured out the open doorway in stifling volumes. Two men suddenly emerged from it, staggering under the weight of a long couch which they released to ready helpers in the

yard. But when they started again for the doorway they were stopped by a man whom the two boys recognized as the town marshal.

"Can't let you go in again, Mr. Coolidge," they heard him say. "Too risky." And he was deaf to the expostulations of the salvagers. As the firemen took the first hose into the house the flames for a moment lighted up the hall, throwing the narrow staircase into relief. The marshal pointed, and the two men apparently recognized the force of his objections, for they turned back and hurriedly set about getting the goods with which the yard was strewn into places of safety.

"I wonder how they got Taylor out with his sprained knee," said Dick to Trevor.

"Carried him, I fancy. I wonder where he is." One of the lads who had roomed in the doomed building, and who was watching the conflagration with sentiments divided between regret for his lost chattels and joy in the brilliant spectacle, caught Trevor's eye. "I say, Simpson," he called, "what did they do with Taylor?" But Simpson shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't know; guess they took him across to Cupples's. I didn't see him at all." A terrible fear gripped Dick's heart. It showed in his face, for Trevor gasped and looked about at a loss.

"But they *must* have got him out, Dick," he cried. "Wait, I'll ask." He darted toward the crowd in the yard.

Dick followed. Mr. Coolidge, trembling with excitement and his recent exertions, stood mopping his forehead just inside the gate, and recounting for the fifth time the story of the fire's origin. To him came Trevor.

"Taylor, sir?" he asked in tones that trembled despite that he told himself over and over that it was all right; that Taylor must surely have been rescued. "Roy Taylor, Mr. Coolidge? Did he—— Where was he taken, sir?"

"Taylor?" faltered the boarding-house keeper. "Why —I—I—— Who saw that Taylor boy?" he shouted, turning to the group about him. The chatter ceased, and a silence fell that chilled Trevor and Dick to the heart. None answered for a moment. At last:

"He got out, didn't he, George?" shrieked a woman's voice, shrill-toned and hysterical. "You know he got out, don't you?"

But Coolidge only shook his head, his face growing ashen. "I—I don't know! I asked the boys; they said every one was out; you were here, and Sarah, and——" A murmur of horror arose and grew. Dick, pale-faced and sick at heart, stared at the burning building. Suddenly in the street voices broke into exclamations of horror; there was a pushing here and there; Dick turned and heard a cry: "Where are the firemen? They can save him!" The next instant Carl Gray, white-faced and breathless, broke through the gate.

"There's some one in that room back there! I saw a

face at the window! I—it looked like Roy Taylor. Dick, is that you? What shall we do?" Carl seized him by the arms, staring miserably into his eyes, his hands trembling. For a moment Dick stared back at him. Then, throwing off his hands, he turned and without a word dashed toward the front door.

"Dick! *Dick!*" shrieked Trevor. "Come back, you fool!" He sped after his chum toward the house. "You can't do it, Dick!" But Dick paid no heed; it is doubtful if he heard. Just before the porch stood the marshal with warning hand outstretched.

"Here, get back there! You can't go in." Dick tried to rush by, but the officer seized him and held him firmly. Trevor came up panting. Dick viewed the marshal with angry eyes.

"Let me go!" he said fiercely. "There's a boy upstairs! He'll be burned up, you fool!"

"A boy up there?" repeated the marshal doubtingly. "How do you know?" He eased his grip on Dick's shoulder. Like a flash the latter shook off the hand, seized the astounded officer about the neck, and with a quick jerk sent him sprawling, face down, on the gravel path. "Tell them to put up ladders!" he shouted to Trevor, and with a bound was up the steps and had entered the doorway.

"Dick! Dick, come back!" shrieked Trevor. Through the murk of smoke the edge of the staircase was outlined in writhing flames, and for an instant Trevor caught sight of

Dick half-way up it. With a sob Trevor leaped toward the porch. But a strong hand seized him and brought him tumbling back to the ground.

"One of you'll do," said the marshal's voice in his ear. "No use in your both being burned up."

"But he'll be killed!" cried Trevor, striking out savagely at his captor. "Let me go, you—you brute! Can't you understand? Dick will be killed!" But he was forced, struggling, gasping, sobbing, down the walk.

"Barnes!" bellowed the marshal's voice, "there's a boy up there. This youngster will tell you about it. Get your ladder quick!"

CHAPTER XX

AND EXTORTS A PROMISE

The heat was awful. At the turn in the staircase Dick faltered and leaned against the wall. His eyes were smarting with the acrid smoke; he could scarcely breathe. Below him the door of the first-floor room to the left was crackling savagely, the flames showing strangely red through the eddying, rolling banks of smoke. Above him the stairs were outlined with tiny tongues of fire or crimson patches of smoldering woodwork, and beyond all was dark, foul with the fumes which had poured up from the floor below. The stairs under his feet grew hot, and the wall against which he leaned a hand was like a pave on which a summer sun has beaten for hours.

His first thought had been to find a fireman and lead him to Taylor's room, which was on the back of the house, next to that in which the fire was eating rapidly from below. But as yet he had seen no one. From the first floor came dull blows of axes tearing into the timbers and plaster. Should he go down again and summon help? But no, for scarce a dozen steps intervened between him and the

door of Taylor's room. If the ladders were being brought to the window his task would prove simple, and might be finished ere assistance could be found. And even as he hesitated there, striving to protect his aching eyes with one arm, the matter was decided for him. With a sound like that of a mighty wave breaking upon a pebble-strewn beach the fire broke through the door below, crumpling it up like a sheet of metal foil and hurling it upward in a blast of flaring cinders. Great tongues of flame burst forth into the hallway as from the mouth of a giant furnace, and as he looked the stairs behind him caught like tinder, and a breath, scorching, suffocating, rushed up, seeming to take him bodily from his feet and hurl him upon the smoking steps above.

With a gasp, he struggled to his feet and fought blindly up the remaining stairs. His escape by the front of the house was cut off. And then for the first time the possibility of finding Taylor's door locked from within faced him. If it should be so then his work was all in vain, for he had no hope of being able to force the lock there in that deadening swirl of smoke. From the head of the stairs to the door of the room occupied by Taylor was but a half dozen feet, but Dick, with his sleeve pressed against his mouth and his eyes fast closed, won it only after what seemed ages, though from the moment he had entered the house until his groping fingers closed on the knob but a scant minute had passed. Half sick with the fear that he

would find the door fast, he hesitated a second; and then, with a stifled sob, turned the handle.

The door opened, a flood of cooler air met him, and in a moment he had staggered inside and had closed the door again. At first he could see nothing, for the room was in darkness save for the little light that found its way through the window on the side of the house, and his streaming eyes hurt him terribly. He took a dozen deep inhalations of the air, which, while heavy with the fumes from the adjoining room, was pure indeed compared with that scorching, smarting breath without. Then he raised his voice.

"Taylor!" he called, and then louder, "Taylor! Taylor!"

There was no sound save the roar of the fire, the subdued noise of the shouting crowd in the street, and now and then the crash of a falling timber. He peered rapidly about him, striving in the strange ruddy half-light that rose and fell over the room to descry the object of his search. There was the bed and here, nearer at hand, the square table; beyond that was the armchair. Perhaps—— He crossed the room quickly toward it, stumbled over some obstruction, and fell to his knees on the carpet. With a leaping heart he turned. There was a crash of falling woodwork outside, and for an instant the room was bright with the light of the flames. And in that instant he saw that he was bending over the outstretched body of Roy Taylor, lying face down by the table, one arm curved under

the head, the other stretched forth with fingers that clutched blindly in the darkness.

"Taylor!" Dick stooped and raised the apparently lifeless body into a sitting posture. "Taylor!" he cried again, a dreadful fear clutching at his heart. To his joy the form stirred and a groan reached his ears.

"Taylor! Brace up! You're all right; do you hear me?"

A muttered word, low, indistinguishable, answered his appeal. He looked toward the half-opened window. Surely the ladders would be there in a moment! The smoke poured through under the door and wherever there was a crevice, and momentarily increased in volume. Dick's eyes and lungs again gave the alarm. He shook Taylor with a sudden impulse of terror.

"Wake up, you fool!" he cried. "Get on your feet, or I'll leave you here! Do you hear? I'll leave you alone if you don't wake up!"

Suddenly an arm clutched itself about his shoulders and he knew that Taylor heard him. Then, "Save me!" cried a voice weak and hoarse from terror. "Get me out, oh, get me out! Don't leave me!"

"Well, keep awake, do you hear? Can you walk?" There was no answer, but Dick could feel the other's body shaking with sobs. "Cut that out!" he said savagely. "Brace up, man. Try to crawl to the window. I'll help you. Let go my arm, hang you! Let go, do you hear?"

With strong fingers he broke the detaining clutch and half lifted the other to his feet. "Come on; get to the window; they're bringing ladders!" But Taylor, weakened by his long period in bed, unmanned by his awful experience alone and well-nigh helpless in the burning house, was incapable of standing. With a rush of pity, Dick let him slide toward the floor, until by stooping and moving backward he could pull him by the shoulders across the room. There was no time to consider the injured knee. The room was filled with smoke; the heat was becoming intolerable; in the hall just outside the door the flames were crackling noisily, and to the left the plaster was breaking and falling under the heat of the fire in the adjoining apartment. At the window Dick propped Taylor against the wall and threw up the sash. Outside all was light as day toward the front of the house. He could see figures moving to and fro, could hear the cries of the fire-fighters, but no ladders were in sight. Below the lawn was some twenty feet distant. He could drop if he had to with some hope of escaping anything worse than a bad jar. But Taylor?

Suddenly, as he leaned there with the cool night air driving by him, he asked himself why he should have risked his life for Roy Taylor. Why continue to risk it? Of all fellows in the school Taylor was the last to deserve consideration, much less sacrifice, from him. He would wait as long as he could without endangering his life, he told himself, and then he'd drop from the window. And Tay-

lor? Taylor was nothing to him; he deserved no help from him; he had injured him all that he could. Taylor must look to himself!

And yet as the thoughts rushed through his mind, he knew deep down somewhere within him that they were all wrong, and knew that though the ladders never came he would not leave the youth that sat shaking, terrified beside him.

"But they must come!" he muttered. And leaning out he called at the top of his voice for help. And then, around the corner of the house, from the back, rushed two figures and stared upward at him. They waved their hands excitedly.

"Keep up! The ladder's coming! Can you hold out a minute?"

"Yes," cried Dick.

Perhaps the first temptation, as feeble as it had proved, had paved the way and weakened his conscience for that which now assailed him.

"At least make him pay for it!" whispered a voice. "It is worth anything you can ask. Remember how he has injured you. Make your bargain!"

He turned suddenly toward the lolling figure.

"Taylor, do you hear me?"

"Yes," came the answer, weak and trembling.

"Do you know who I am?" There was no reply.

"I'm Hope!"

An instance of silence followed. Then, "Hope!" came a whisper, low, incredulous.

"Yes. Listen. I can save you if—if I want to. Are you listening?" Outside were many voices on the lawn under the casement.

"Yes, yes. Save me, Hope, save me!"

"I will on one condition," whispered Dick hoarsely, hating himself, despising himself from the bottom of his heart, yet hurrying on with his words. "The bargain you made is done with; do you understand? I'll not give up the captaincy, Taylor, but you must promise to come back as you said you would, and help all you know how. You must promise this, and you must keep your promise!"

A ladder scraped against the boards outside, rattled once, and was still. A voice called: "Hurry! He was there a moment ago; we saw him! He can't be far away! Look, the fire's got through!" And as the words reached him Dick heard the sound of falling mortar, of crackling woodwork, and a great glare smote his eyes and an awful heat surged toward him, making him stagger and gasp for breath. The wall dividing the room from the front apartment was at last conquered, and the flames leaped through the breach, writhing, eager for their prey. For a moment terror seized Dick, and he could only stare in horror toward the groping tongues that scorched his face and dried the breath in his nostrils. Then, stooping quickly, he lifted Taylor's body to the sill.

"Your promise!" he cried. "Quick!"

"Yes, yes! For God's sake, Hope! Anything! Oh, it's too late, too late!"

The ravening flames poured toward them, clutching at them with greedy arms. A form darkened the window and a voice cried:

"Lift him out! Easy! That's right; can you get down?"

"I—I think so," muttered Dick, fighting down the desire to let himself go and fall in a heap across the sill.

"Get onto the ladder, quick, and stay there! I'll get you out of here in a second. Here, Gus, take this chap; I guess he's fainted." The fireman lowered himself down a few rungs, clutching Taylor's limp form, and Dick squirmed unsteadily onto the ladder. There he held tightly and closed his eyes. The room was red with roaring, seething flames, but to him it seemed all a vast darkness. From below—or was it not rather from miles away?—came a long cheer; died away; increased again. And then Dick felt arms about him.

"Keep your head now, sir, and put your arms around my neck." Dick obeyed as in a dream. He felt himself descending—down—down—down——

And then his head fell forward and he fainted.

When he opened his eyes he found himself lying on the grass across the village street. The world was very strange, crimson and yellow, and the trees threw great wavering

shadows against the sky above. Some one was holding something to his lips, and he drank because that seemed the natural thing to do. Then a recollection of it all came back, and he tried to sit up.

"Lie still," said a voice. Dick looked. It was Malcolm Kirk. And beside him was Trevor, looking absurdly like a red Indian in the queer light. And there was Professor Longworth, and somebody he didn't know, and, oh, lots of other persons! It was really very silly for them to all stand around like that, and——

"Where's Taylor?" he asked suddenly in a voice that caused him to wonder whether it was really his, so weak and husky was it.

"Taylor's all right," answered Kirk cheerfully. "They've taken him to Hamment's. How do you feel now?"

"Kind of funny; I guess I'm sleepy; I guess I'll go home."

"You're going in a minute; they're bringing a carriage."

Dick started up wildly, clutching at Kirk's arm.

"Is—is anything wrong with me?" he whispered hoarsely. "Have I broken my leg, or—or anything?"

"No, certainly not. Only you're rather weak, you know. We're going to take you back in a carriage so you won't have to walk."

"Oh." He sank back again. Then he whispered: "I

can't have anything the matter with me, you know, because there's the crew, you see. We have to think of that."

"Certainly," answered Kirk very, very gravely, "there's the crew. And here's the carriage. And to prove to you that you're all right I'll let you walk over to it. Bear a hand, Nesbitt."

Dick was raised to his feet, and to his great relief found that he could walk well enough, if a trifle unsteadily, and so reached the carriage and sank into the seat. Trevor took his place beside him, and Kirk sat by the driver, and they whirled away. Back of them the flames were still leaping heavenward, flooding the sky with a crimson radiance as they entered the academy gate.

"Are you all right?" whispered Trevor.

"Yes, I guess so; kind of tired. I was a silly chump to go and faint that way."

"Rot!" answered Trevor vehemently. "You—you're a blooming hero, Dick, that's what you are!"

And for reply Dick only shut his eyes and leaned away from his chum.

CHAPTER XXI

A DISAPPOINTING HERO

Dick was a hero. Every one said so; and "every one" certainly ought to have known. His advent at chapel the morning following the fire was the signal for an outburst of applause, a token of approval the like of which had not occurred at Hillton since that far-famed half-back, Joel March, was a student there and had rescued a lad from drowning in the river. Yes, Dick was a hero. Professor Wheeler sent for him and said all kinds of nice things, and the resident instructor, Professor Tompkins, waylaid him in the lower hall of Masters and beamed on him over his glasses, and other members of the Faculty shook hands with him warmly and quoted appropriate things in Greek and Latin, and the students played the part of a monotonous chorus and whispered when he passed.

But if Dick was a hero, his conception of the rôle was all wrong, judged by the accepted standard. Instead of wearing an expression of modest pride, instead of receiving the tributes of an admiring public with blushes and murmured expostulations as, of course, every hero has done since the time of Adam, he mooned around out-of-the-way

corners like a bear with a sore head, while his most gracious response to the admiring public was a muttered "Oh, dry up, will you?" delivered in something between a growl and a groan.

"You're absolutely the most disappointing hero I ever heard of!" said Trevor in disgust. "Why, if I'd done a thing like that I'd be strutting around the yard with my head back and my thumbs in my waistcoat pockets! A chap would think you were grouchy about it!" Whereupon Dick turned angrily:

"Trevor, if you don't shut up I'll pound you good and hard! Now, I mean what I say!"

"Some are born to greatness," murmured Trevor, "some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them—and are exceeding wroth. I have spoken!" And having spoken, he bolted out the door a fraction of a second ahead of a German dictionary thrown with much vigor and precision.

But, despite Dick's displeasure, there was both truth and justice in Trevor's charge. Dick was disappointing. And the school at large marveled, and finding that their admiration for the plucky rescue was not wanted, thereafter refrained from further mention of the matter in Dick's presence. And that youth kept to his room a good deal, where, instead of delving in his books, he sat glowering into space, or walked restlessly around like a caged lion. He became extremely taciturn, and even rowing affairs

failed to arouse any but the most indifferent replies. Trevor wondered and grew alarmed.

By the burning of Coolidge's house—due to the upsetting and subsequent explosion of a patent non-explosive lamp — seven boys found themselves homeless and less about everything save the scanty wardrobes in which they had made their escapes. Coolidge's was a mere pile of ashes and charred timbers. For the family charity was unnecessary, since the house and contents had been well insured, but for the boys who had lost almost everything a scheme was speedily set on foot. A meeting was held in Society House, and the president of the senior class, Wallace Osgood, made a stirring address, which every one applauded, and then asked for suggestions as to a means of raising money to reimburse, to some extent at least, the victims of the fire. There was no response until Malcolm Kirk, who, with several members of the Faculty, presided on the stage, moved that an amateur performance, the exact character of which was to be later decided upon, be given in the Town Hall. He was sure, he said, that there was enough talent in the school to afford an interesting program, and believed that enough tickets could be sold at the academy and in the village to more than fill the hall. The plan met with instant favor; Professor Wheeler indorsed it, and moved that Mr. Kirk be asked to assume charge of it; Mr. Kirk assented and moved, in turn, that committees to work with him be appointed from the four

classes; the classes made their appointments on the spot; a Saturday night some two weeks distant was chosen as the date of the entertainment, and the meeting broke up with great enthusiasm.

Boys hurried to their rooms, and brought down dusty banjos, guitars, and mandolins, and for nights afterward the dormitories were made hideous with chromatic scales and strange, weird chords. Dick found himself one of the senior committee, and throwing aside some of his lethargy worked busily with the rest. The first meeting of the joint committee of arrangements was held in Kirk's room the following evening, and he outlined his plan. There was not, he thought, sufficient time before the date agreed upon in which to find performers for and rehearse anything in the way of a play. Instead, he would suggest that scenes from some well-known book be presented, each carrying only enough dialogue to make themselves clear. For instance, there was Tom Brown at Rugby; that afforded numerous opportunities for interesting stage pictures; there was Tom's leave-taking with his father at the inn, in which the father's excellent advice would, he thought, appeal to the risibilities of the audience. And then there was the fight with "Slogger" Williams, the hazing scene before the fireplace, and so on through the book. For the first part of the entertainment he suggested that the musical talent of the school could be levied upon; some of the fellows could undoubtedly sing; many could perform on some instrument or

other; perhaps some could give recitations; and no doubt the band would do its share. For a further attraction, to constitute a third part of the program, Kirk suggested a series of representations of various sports, each to be pictured by a single person in appropriate costume—as Football, Baseball, Rowing, Lacrosse, Cricket, Hockey, Basketball, Skating, Tabogganing, Snow-shoeing, Tennis, and so on, all to be grouped together on the stage afterward for a final tableau.

The plan was adopted, and for the next two weeks every one was very busy, Kirk and Dick especially, since rowing affairs claimed more and more of their attention every day. May had brought fine, clear weather and sunny skies, under which it was a pleasure to work. The little chilling breezes that had been ruffling the blue waters of the Hudson had crept away in the track of winter, and the valley was green with fresh verdure and warm with the spring sunshine. Each day brought fresh hope to those who were interested in the success of the crew. The eight members of the varsity worked together with something approaching accord, and even Taylor's continued absence from the boat was no longer a reason for constant dismay; for Jones, by dint of eternal vigilance and much tongue-lashing, had at last made of himself a fairly acceptable Number 7. Taylor was still laid up, for the fire and his efforts to fight his way from the building before Dick's arrival had set back his recovery at least a fortnight.

Many times Waters had brought word to Dick that Taylor had asked to see him, and Dick had as many times answered that he would go over to Waters's room as soon as he found time. But he took good care never to allow himself opportunity. Trevor told him he was a brute. Dick growled.

On the Saturday afternoon preceding the entertainment the varsity and second crews met for their first tussle on the water, and the result was surprising even to the varsity. The two boats raced from the down-stream end of Long Isle up the river for a half mile, and the varsity's victory was too decisive to allow of its being explained by crediting the second with unusually slow work. In fact, even the second made favorable time for the course, while the varsity, which finished twelve lengths to the good, came within a few seconds of equaling the best record. But this was a fact known only to Kirk, Dick, and Keene, for the former pointed out dryly that it wouldn't do them any harm if their rivals at Marshall continued to believe them in poor shape. "It may lead to overconfidence on St. Eustace's part," said Kirk, "and overconfidence is usually a winning card—for the other side."

But, despite the brightening prospects, Dick was not happy. In fact, he didn't remember of ever having been so utterly miserable and out of humor with himself. He didn't pretend to misunderstand the cause; he was, he told himself savagely, at least honest with Dick Hope, no matter

how much of a scoundrel he was in reality. He knew that if he went to Roy Taylor like a man and absolved him from the promise so villainously extorted, he would, in a measure at least, recover his self-respect. He tried at first to justify his conduct to himself by craftily pointing out the fact that he had used Taylor's own weapons; that if Taylor had not acted like a thief there would have been no call for Dick to act like one; and that, when the matter was observed dispassionately, he had only taken advantage of his opportunity to work for the good of the crew and the school. But the pose of disinterested public benefactor didn't satisfy him, and, although he ground his teeth and knit his brows and doggedly determined to hold on to the vantage he had gained, he was not happy, but, on the contrary, loathed himself heartily, hated Trevor because that youth insisted upon thinking him a high-minded hero, detested Taylor because the latter was primarily to blame for it all, and lost his appetite, didn't half know his lessons, and was, in short, at odds with the whole world.

And then came the night of the benefit performance in the Town Hall. St. Eustace had subscribed for fifty tickets at a dollar apiece, and had then returned them to the committee to be resold. As a result of this, and of the activity of the class ticket-sellers, the hall on the night of the entertainment was altogether too small for the purpose. The villagers had responded generously to the appeal, and had bought seats until it had begun to look as though there

would be no places left for the students. But every one in the end managed to squeeze in somehow; and as every member of the audience, whether he saw the performance from a comfortable seat in the front of the hall or only caught an occasional glimpse of it from behind a wall of less fortunate persons, paid a dollar for the privilege; and as the expenses were almost nil, the exchequer when the curtain went up held the very satisfactory total of $354, a fraction over $50 for each of the fire victims.

There is not space enough here to do justice to the excellency of the program. It will serve to say that some twenty boys sang, played on a marvelous variety of instruments, from accordion to piano, and recited. Williams gave operatic selections on a zither, and for encore rendered Way Down Upon the Suwanee River; a youth named Billings sang Massa's in the Cold, Cold Ground, not so much because it was intensely musical as because it was about the only thing that accommodated itself to his voice; Todd sat down in a straight-backed chair at the front of the stage and did all kinds of stunts on a banjo, which pleased his audience vastly; Osgood sang The New Bully in a manner that sent the younger boys into spasms of laughter; Trevor, attired in hastily improvised costume, sang a number of coster songs in a sweet tenor, and gained much applause; Jones recited the tragic termination of the baseball career of one named Casey; and so it went. And when Part First had come to an end the stage was set for the first of the

Scenes from Tom Brown at Rugby, and it fell to Dick, as his contribution to the evening's entertainment, to go before the curtain and explain what was to follow. His appearance was greeted with the heartiest applause that had thus far fallen to the lot of any. The audience was in good humor, Dick was a hero, and here was an opportunity to show approval of the gallant rescuer. The boys cheered, the villagers clapped and stamped applause, the less polite members of the community that fringed the gathering yelled vociferously, and Dick—well, he did a most unaccountable thing: he grew pale, faltered, and even turned toward the wing as though meditating escape. "Such modesty!" breathed a kind-hearted lady in the second row. But after the first impulse toward flight Dick waited for silence, white-faced, unsmiling, and when it came made his speech calmly, in well-modulated but unenthusiastic voice, bowing himself off finally under a second bombardment of applause. Then the curtain arose on Tom Brown and his father in the tap-room of the inn. Mr. Brown, Sr., impersonated by Crocker of the varsity crew, was a hale and hearty country squire in wig, long coat, and top-boots; while a small junior, in ridiculous long trousers and chimney-pot hat, made up excellently as a rather nervous Tom. Crocker delivered his speech of advice in a manner that captured the audience, Boots appeared at the door to announce that the stage-coach was waiting and the curtain descended amid applause.

Dick, however, saw nothing of this. Having gained the wings he seized his hat from a chair, and, unobserved, made his way out of the door into the rear hall, clattered down the stairs and into the darkness. From the brightly lighted building came the sound of clapping hands and laughter; ahead the village street stretched in semidarkness. A yellow gaslight flared at each corner of the little triangle known as The Park. Dick almost ran. As he passed Watson's stables a challenging bark told him that Muggins had heard his footsteps. On the next corner stood Bradford's boarding-house. Dick found the front door unlocked, and after a moment's hesitation climbed the stairs. On the landing above five portals confronted him, but from under only one of them did any light shine. He knocked. A voice bade him enter. Obeying, he found himself in a long, low-studded room, handsomely, almost luxuriously furnished. On a broad couch under the strong light of a big bronze lamp, a book in his hand and his listless eyes turned inquiringly toward the door, lay Roy Taylor.

CHAPTER XXII

TAYLOR ACCEPTS DEFEAT

"Hello, Hope!"

Taylor raised himself and stared wonderingly at the visitor. His pale cheeks flushed and an unaccustomed embarrassment seized upon him. "Sit down," he continued. "I—I'd given up looking for you."

Dick tossed his cap on the table, and drew a chair to a position near the couch. His face, too, was pale, but there was no sign of embarrassment visible; only a strong determination was indicated by the little creases in his forehead and the sudden squaring of his jaw. He launched into the subject of his visit abruptly.

"I came over because I'm sick of this business, Taylor. Look here, I acted like a brute and a contemptible cad the other night; I knew it then; I don't know what got into me. I've tried to stick it out, but it's no good."

Taylor was gazing at him with a puzzled frown.

"I ask your pardon, Taylor, for taking advantage of you—of your position that night, and I want you to say that you forgive me. The promise you made—rather, the promise I forced from you—doesn't hold. I'm going to

resign the captaincy to-morrow, and it's yours as soon as you want it, as far as I'm concerned." He paused and looked intently at Taylor. The latter gave a little embarrassed laugh, and dropped his eyes to the book beside him.

"I think you're talking a good deal of nonsense, Hope," he answered finally. "But if you want me to say that I forgive you, why, that's all right. I can't see that there's anything to forgive. You simply turned the tables on me when you had the chance; you'd been a silly ass if you hadn't. And, anyhow, I don't see that there is anything to forgive when a chap saves your life. It may sound rather funny for me to be thanking you and all that, after we've been rowing as we have, and maybe you don't want my thanks, but, of course, I'm—I'm awfully grateful. It was a jolly brave thing to do, though I don't pretend to know why you did it. I thought until a minute ago that —that you'd seen your chance of turning the tables and took advantage of it, but——"

"You mean you thought I started to get you out simply so that I could bully you into releasing me from my promise?" asked Dick, with a tremble in his voice.

Taylor glanced up hurriedly, dropped his gaze again, and went on quickly.

"Well, that was natural, wasn't it? But I see now that it wasn't so. Anyway, I'm awfully much obliged to you. I told Waters to ask you to come and see me half a dozen

times; I wanted to say this before; but I guess you didn't care to see me."

"I was pretty busy," muttered Dick.

"Oh, I don't blame you. I dare say I wouldn't have come if I'd been in your place. After what I've been up to, you know. But that—well, that's over with now."

"Yes," answered Dick, "that's done with. We won't say any more about it; just forget it; goodness knows, I don't want to remember it. It made me act like a regular beast; I've been hating myself ever since; I've been ashamed to look any one in the face! After all, it's only the success of the boat I want, Taylor, and I believe you'll work for that. If I thought you wouldn't——" He paused and looked at the other with an ugly glint in his eyes. "But I think you will. When can you take hold?"

"You're making a mistake, Hope," answered Taylor, with the suggestion of his old mocking smile visible. "I've had lots of time for thinking things over lately. Lying here like this a chap has to think a good deal. Well, I said it was all over with. What I meant was my captaincy scheme. I'm beaten; I'll acknowledge it; not beaten altogether by you, though, Hope. Luck or Fate or something had a hand in it. You and I don't look at things in just the same way; I know you wouldn't have done what I've done to get a dozen captaincies; I dare say there's something in the way you're brought up. I sort of brought myself up, you know. I rather imagine having a mother and father

and living with them makes a difference; I never had either—that is, since I can remember. But you don't care about all that, I guess. I wanted the captaincy, and I set out to get it, using whatever means I could find. It wasn't square; I'll acknowledge that. I never tried to make myself believe that it was. I'd managed to get what I was after, it seemed, when luck, or—well, whatever you like to call it—cut in. Then I had that fall. I suspected then that it was all up. I dare say I'm a little superstitious. When the fire came and you turned up in the nick of time I knew that luck was against me. I expected you to make that bargain, Hope; you see, it was just what I'd have done in your place. When I got to the window I thought for a minute that you'd lose your chance; I was calling you a fool; and all the time I was scared blue. I don't believe I'm more of a coward than the next chap, but that five minutes or five years before you came was awful!" He stopped and a shudder passed over him. "Well, you seized your chance. You say now that that promise doesn't hold, but it does hold. Oh, yes, it holds good and fast for all time, Hope."

"It doesn't!" cried Dick. "I won't have it!"

"But it does," replied Taylor calmly. "And even if it didn't, it wouldn't make any difference about the captaincy. I may be built somewhat different from you, but I've got some principles. They may be queer ones, but I won't fight a fellow that has saved my life. That settles

it. I'll stick to that promise, just as you would have stuck to yours. I'll go back to work on the crew just as soon as the doctor lets me, which will likely be next week, and I'll do my level best."

Taylor lay back on the cushions looking rather tired and pale, and Dick got up and wandered restlessly about the room for a minute. It was all so different from what he had looked forward to that he found himself incapable of deciding whether the course Taylor insisted upon was right or wrong. It was so easy that it somehow appeared as though it must be wrong. He was to keep the captaincy, Taylor was to return to the boat, the whole episode was to be closed; in short, he was to reap the benefit of his dishonest deed without suffering punishment. Although, he reflected the next moment, perhaps he had been suffering the punishment the last two weeks!

"But just the same," he said aloud, "it doesn't seem right."

"That's your New England conscience," mocked Taylor. "You think that because a thing didn't break your back in the doing it can't be anything but an invention of the devil's. I may have an easier morality than you, Hope; but, thank Heaven, I wasn't born in New England!"

Dick stared at him.

"But, see here, Taylor, if I agree to this——"

"You can't do anything else."

"Do you mean that you will—will be satisfied?"

"Probably not; and yet, I don't know; I'm rather sick of it; this being laid up like a blasted mummy takes the pluck out of a fellow. Maybe"—he smiled quizzically—"maybe it takes some of the meanness out, too. Anyhow, I'll keep to the promise. And if that silly conscience of yours is still grumbling, why, choke it off. You've done right enough; you've done more than I'd have done; though, of course, that doesn't signify much. You slipped up for the minute, and now you are sorry. As far as I'm concerned, I forgive you, although, as I said before, I don't see that I've anything to forgive."

"I'll never forgive myself," said Dick, with conviction.

Taylor shrugged his shoulders and moved his head as though weary of the subject.

"You'll have to settle that with yourself; I dare say you'll be fighting it out for the next ten years."

Dick took up his cap, hesitated an instant, and then strode to the couch.

"Mind shaking hands?" he asked.

Taylor grinned.

"What's the use?" he asked. "It won't make things any better or any worse."

"I'd rather, if you don't mind," replied Dick gravely.

"Oh, all right." Taylor put out his, and the two lads clasped hands silently.

"Good-night," said Dick, turning away. "I hope you'll get well soon and come and help us. We need you."

"Good-night," answered Taylor. "I dare say I'll be out by the last of the week. You're not a half bad sort, Hope; if it wasn't for that bothersome conscience of yours I think we might get on together fairly well."

Dick's last glance across the room showed him a pallid, tired-looking youth sitting on the edge of the couch, with dejection expressed in his attitude, but a mocking smile on his face.

CHAPTER XXIII

PROSPECTS OF VICTORY

The erstwhile gallant crew of The Sleet lay upon the grass in front of Academy Building in the shadow thrown by the wall that runs along the edge of the bluff. About them in little piles lay various worn and tattered books. Dick and Carl, propped upon their elbows, were nibbling the succulent ends of grass blades. Trevor lay flat upon his back, gazing steadfastly upward at the slowly marching clouds, supreme content upon his sunburned face. Stewart Earle sat cross-legged and performed wonderful feats with a pearl-handled penknife. It was a few minutes before two; dinner was over and the bell had not yet rung for recitations.

Before them the warm red bulk of Academy Building, already hidden in wide expanses with tender green ivy leaves, arose against the velvety blue of the sky. In the tower a quivering disk of dazzling light marked where the sun shone upon the old bell. The trees were in full leaf, and the green was a little forest of light and shade and murmurous branches. Even the river dozed, below the bluff turquoise blue unbroken by swirl or eddy, beyond in the dis-

tance aglint with the sun. In the dormitories the windows were thrown wide, and boys lazed on the cushioned seats. There was a tuneful, unceasing hum of insects; the sun shone hotly; summer had come to the valley of the Hudson. It was the third day of June, a fact just remarked upon by Stewart, who had casually added that it was the anniversary of the Battle of Cold Harbor. This exciting announcement went unnoticed for a moment. Then Carl yawned loudly.

"Don't believe it," he muttered. More silence followed. Then, "It is extremely bad taste," said Dick, "to air your knowledge in—that—in that——" Then his teeth closed on an unusually attractive grass stem and he subsided. A little breeze crept up the slope from the campus and stirred the brown locks over Trevor's forehead. He sat up suddenly and observed Dick and Carl in fine disdain.

"Lazy beggars," he muttered. At great labor and with many harrowing groans he reached about and gathered a handful of grass. Dick knew what was coming, but hadn't the energy to prepare for resistance until it was too late. Then he sat up himself and, pulling the wad from his neck, stuffed it down Carl's. Every one giggled; it was really very funny for a warm day. The quartet were now sitting in a circle, even Carl showing signs of life. Conversation appeared to be necessary. Dick opened his lips and closed them again without a sound. Trevor came to the rescue.

"Hot," he remarked.

"You're an awful chatterbox," sighed Carl. But the spell was broken.

"Only two weeks to the end of school," said Dick. "By Jove, I'd just like to know where the time's gone; it doesn't seem any time since spring vacation!"

"That's so," answered Carl. "Another two weeks and it'll be all over, and good-by to old Hillton. It's funny how sorry it makes a chap. That's the odd thing about it; it doesn't seem so fine until you have to leave it all. I wonder if I'll have as good a time at college?"

"I know," mused Dick sentimentally, "it's almost like leaving home. I wish—I wish I was going to stay another year!"

"My, you're funny," quoth Stewart. "Catch me being sorry when I get through!"

"Wait; you will be," answered Carl. "There's a whole raft of fellows going up to Harwell this year, isn't there? Do you know anything about your room yet, Dick?"

"No; I guess I'll find a small one near the Yard for this year. When Trevor comes he and I are going to room together, aren't we, old chap?"

"If you're good," answered his chum gravely. When hostilities had ended Carl said reminiscently:

"It's been a pretty good year for Hillton, hasn't it?"

"So far; if you only beat St. Eustace at baseball, and if we can only win on the river it'll be the best year on

record, I guess. We certainly did her up finely at the interscholastic meet, eh?"

"I should say so! Forty-three points to twenty-nine! And little Stew here to thank for ten of them. Take off your hat, Stew!"

"'Tis off."

"I'll never forget the way in which he ran away from that St. Eustace fellow in the half-mile," continued Carl, smiling. "And to think that when he came here three years ago he couldn't turn the door-knob without using both hands!"

"Oh, dry up," said Stewart.

"I guess you're pretty certain to beat St. Eustace at baseball, aren't you, Carl?"

"Yes, pretty certain; barring accidents we ought to have little trouble. We play Shrewsburg again Saturday, and I believe we'll shut her out."

"Don't get too confident," warned Dick.

"No fear; and I don't talk like this before the fellows. But we've really got the finest lot of players that I ever saw."

"I know. Well, if you get both games from St. Eustace your name will go down to posterity in red letters with a wreath about it. I only wish I was as hopeful as you are."

"Old Dick wouldn't let himself get hopeful if we had a boatful of tailor's dummies to row against," said Trevor. "There isn't any possibility of our getting beaten on the fifteenth—barring accidents."

"But the trouble is we can't bar accidents," replied Dick. "They will happen even in the best regulated of crews. Somebody's certain to take sick or sprain his wrist or something."

"Isn't he an old granny?" asked Trevor disgustedly.

"I hear you had a shake-up yesterday?" queried Carl.

"A little one; Kirk took Milton out and is trying Cheever at three. And he dropped Rankin from the second eight. That was all. I guess we'll row about the way we are now. St. Eustace's coach read the riot act last week, they say; dumped two men out of the boat and raked every one over the coals. Oh, well, we'll know all about it in a couple of weeks."

"I wish I was as certain of exams as I am that we'll beat St. Eustace," said Trevor. "By the way, Dick, the pater's coming up for class day to see you graduate. Stewart, they're going to draw for the tennis tournament tonight in Chandler's room."

"How many entries are there?" asked Carl.

"Twenty-two. I hope I don't get drawn for the preliminary round, that's all. I'd hate to get thrown out of it so early and have no——"

"There she goes," said Stewart, jumping up.

The bell in the tower rang lazily, and the four entered Academy Building for two o'clock recitations.

May had slipped into June, and June had brought fresh impetus in every outdoor pursuit. The school was rowing

mad, just as it always was in June, and every day groups of fellows congregated at the boat-house or watched the proceedings from the path above. The trying period of instruction in a pair-oar at the hands of Malcolm Kirk or, as upon occasions, at those of Dick, was over and practice had simmered down to businesslike work in stretches of from an hour to two hours each day. It wasn't all rowing; often the men leaned motionless over their oars while Kirk from the deck of the little Terrible talked to them for a quarter of an hour at a time on the error of their way. Always, nowadays, there was ten minutes or so of practicing starts; often the varsity and second were drawn up on the mark, and were given the word together; and alas for the boat that was behind at the tenth stroke! But it was the best of training, and the proficiency in quick starting which they finally secured stood them in good stead later.

There was less fault-finding on the part of the coach with the fellows as individuals now. The work as a whole received the bulk of his attention, and the most serious fault he had to contend with was a tendency to raise the stroke by rushing the body forward instead of putting more force into the pull through. There were lesser faults, besides; plenty of them; there was probably never yet a perfect crew, and certainly Hillton's varsity was in no danger of becoming one. But on the whole the fellows rowed well, making the most of the long stroke, taking kindly enough to the rather severe leg-work, and gradually acquiring the

ability to spurt quickly and evenly. For this, naturally, much credit belonged to Dick, who, at stroke, displayed wonderful steadiness, and inspired the crew with a sensation of balance and security that promised to accomplish much in time of stress. Taylor, at Number 7, worked with Dick as one cog-wheel works with another, and Kirk was well satisfied with the stern of the varsity boat at least. In the waist a source of some trial was Waters, who of late had displayed a tendency to clip his stroke. Trevor was doing finely at Number 4, and had vindicated Kirk's first impression of him, and Professor Beck's as well, and, for that matter, his own. But perhaps the best feature displayed by the crew was a hearty willingness to work; there were no sluggards in the boat, and an earnest resolve to wrest victory from St. Eustace inspired all.

Taylor had kept his promise, though Dick, to be sure, had never doubted that he would do so. In the course of time the sprained knee was pronounced healed, and he had taken his place in the boat again and had fitted into it in such a way that Dick was convinced that his sacrifice, had it been necessary, would not have been too dear a price to pay for the other's return. The two saw but little of each other outside of training, and the trouble that had threatened Hillton with defeat on the water was never alluded to by either. If they were not friends neither were they enemies, and each had risen in the other's estimation.

CHAPTER XXIV

STEWART'S REVENGE

The tennis tournament began two days after the powwow between the quartet on the lawn. In spite of Trevor's wishes on the subject, he found himself drawn for the preliminary round, and opposed to a lower middle boy named Page. But he had no trouble in winning two sets running, and so qualified for the finals.

The tournament went slowly, for those were busy days at Hillton, and allowances had to be made for the demands of crew and baseball training. But Friday night left only four contestants—Trevor, Stewart, Hollis, and Montgomery. Play in the semifinal round began early Saturday morning. Trevor defeated Montgomery 3-6, 6-2, 6-2, and Stewart won from Hollis 6-3, 7-5. After a half-hour's rest Trevor and Stewart faced each other smilingly across the net in the final round to decide the school championship.

It was a perfect morning for tennis, bright and warm, and though it gave promise of heat later, at ten o'clock a soft, fresh breeze blew across the campus from the woods. Trevor won the toss and chose the south court.

"I see my finish here," he said with a grin.

Stewart laughed.

"I'm glad I've got you scared. How are you feeling?"

"Fine."

"So'm I; so look out for yourself."

Trevor's fears appeared to be justified by events, for Stewart took the first set from him very easily, six games to three, and won the second after a somewhat harder battle to the tune of 7-5. But after that Trevor seemingly found himself, and the third encounter was brilliant enough to win almost unceasing applause from the fairly large throng of spectators. It went to him finally by six games to four, and the fourth set begun.

The two boys played very different tennis. Trevor at his best was supremely careful and painstaking; one might have thought that tennis was a game like chess, in which each stroke was the result of deep study. He played slowly, relying upon scientific placing for his points. His serve was a justly celebrated overhand cut which against almost any boy in the school save his present opponent was very dangerous. But Trevor and Stewart had played together all the spring, and knew each other's style from A to Z, and Stewart had from long experience learned to return Trevor's puzzling service with a forehand stroke off the ground that was almost always successful. Trevor played well back as a rule, and was the possessor of a backhand return that was the admiration of all.

Stewart on the court was like a whirlwind in white flan-

nels. He was all dash and go. Lithe and lightly built, he seemed capable of being everywhere at once, and that without any special effort. His playing was brilliant in the extreme; his service was a swift stroke that landed the ball almost invariably on the service-line, and that required the opponent to stand back of base-line to receive it; his return was a long, lightning-like drive that just topped the net; and his smashing was something terrific. But, like most whirlwind players, Stewart took long risks and occasionally got very wild.

The fourth set went to Trevor after a hard battle, eight games to six, and the decisive struggle commenced. It was Trevor's serve, and for the first time during the contest he won a love game on it, Stewart returning every ball out of court. On Stewart's service Trevor failed almost as signally, getting but one return over. Stewart tried lobbing in the next game with disastrous results, and Trevor again won. With the games 1-3 Stewart took a decided brace and secured the next on his service, and the following one partly through Trevor's poor work and partly through fine handling of the puzzling serves. It was then Trevor's turn to win twice running, and he brought the score to 3-4; Stewart by faultless service made it four games all; each then won on his service and the score was games all.

It had been decided that the final set should not be a vantage set, and hence the next game would settle the con-

test. The two lads changed courts, and the audience looked for a speedy termination of the struggle. Trevor led off with a fault and followed it with a poor serve that allowed Stewart to return a slashing ball far into the right angle of side- and base-lines. Trevor was too late, and amid the applause of the crowd, and somewhat disconcerted, he repeated his previous performance; the first ball went into the net and the second bounced obligingly into Stewart's racket and came skimming back swift and low, touching the canvas strip and dropping almost lifeless in the shadow of the net. This was also lost to Trevor, and the score was love-thirty. Trevor looked grimly determined now, and Stewart watched sharply for the next serve. He found it and returned it, and Trevor, with excellent judgment, crouched out of its way and let it go by well out of court. The next serve was one of Trevor's best, and it found a good big hole in his adversary's racket. The score was thirty all. Stewart found the next serve and put it into Trevor's hands; the latter cut it to the left of the opposite court, but Stewart sent it back neatly toward the base-line. Trevor reached it by a long run, and with a magnificent back-hand stroke tried to place it over his opponent's head. But Stewart was watchful and alert, and ran back in time, and again volleyed, sending the sphere down the right-side line. Trevor again returned, seeking a place out of reach of his nimble adversary, and Stewart, after a hard chase across court, got it on the bound and played it gently over.

Trevor had followed up, however, and it was all over on the next play, for although Stewart dashed back again to the territory he had just left unprotected the ball was dead when he reached it. The score was now 40-30, and the game, set, and match might be won on the next stroke.

Trevor was breathing hard, but there was a grim determination in his eyes. Stewart appeared less tuckered, but he was somewhat pale despite the easy smile that played over his boyish face. Up went Trevor's racket; up went the ball. There was a line of white through the air; Stewart put the head of his racket to the gravel; the ball in its low rebound struck it fair and went hurtling back. Stewart ran up to within a yard of the net. Trevor waited for the bounce, glanced hurriedly over the opposite court, chose his place, and sided his racket. But his plans were wrecked by a pebble. Up went the ball on the rebound almost straight into the air. Trevor darted forward. There was no time for niceties of cutting or placing. Ball and racket came together, and the former went skimming forward, head-high, straight as a dart for Stewart's racket!

The crowd held its breath, picturing the terrific smash to follow, and Trevor scuttled back to the rear of the court from where it might be barely possible to get the ball on its long rebound. Stewart swung his racket back, strong fingers grasping the end of the handle, swung it down with all his force—and stared in seeming amaze. A

groan of dismay went up from the onlookers as the ball passed by untouched and dropped into court.

"Game and set and match!" called the umpire. And then the applause began. Trevor advanced to the net, and he and Stewart shook hands.

"Beastly luck, that last stroke," said Trevor heartily.

"Rotten playing, you mean," answered Stewart, smiling. "I'm glad you've won, Trevor, honestly; but some time you and I'll have it out again, if you like."

"All right; I'd like to. And there's another tournament coming next year, you know."

Dick, who in company with Carl and many other friends, had watched the match from the side-line, slapped Trevor on the shoulder.

"Good work, chum! And you played like a cyclone, Stewart; you ought to have had it." Then Trevor took possession of the little silver mug and wondered where the engraver was going to find room for his name on it, and the crowd broke up and hurried toward the Yard and dinner. On the way Stewart found himself beside Dick. Trevor and Todd were some distance ahead, the latter, who could play tennis about as well as an elephant can jump rope, explaining to the champion where he had made his mistakes.

"That was a queer stroke of yours, Stewart," said Dick.

The younger boy darted a fleeting glance into the other's smiling face.

"Rotten, wasn't it?" he asked.

"Well, I wouldn't call it rotten exactly; I should say it was remarkable."

Stewart again glanced up to find Dick looking at him quizzically. For a moment the two eyed each other; then Stewart laughed and Dick joined in.

"No more remarkable than the way in which Trevor lost the two hundred and twenty yards at the indoor meeting, was it?" he asked.

"No," replied Dick. "I should say they were about on a par. But I didn't think that you suspected——"

"You must think I'm blind then. I knew it well enough, and I made up my mind then to have my revenge. And I've had it to-day. But, I say, Dick, I'd rather you wouldn't tell Trevor. I don't think he knows."

"No, I won't say a word to him," replied Dick with a smile. "You're a funny pair, you two."

But he went on up the river-path with one crimson-clad arm over Stewart's shoulders.

The week that intervened between the tournament and the boat-race passed quickly. There was an air of expectancy and excitement in the air. Examinations were approaching, class day was almost at hand, and Hillton and St. Eustace were about to match their prowess both on the water and on the diamond. The varsity crew was on the river twice daily, but the hardest of training was over, and a period of light work took the place of the former grinding labor. The time for sledge-hammer blows was past, and the

efforts of coach, captain, and coxswain were directed toward putting the finishing polish on their handiwork. From Marshall came the news that St. Eustace's head rowing coach was firmly of the belief that he had succeeded in turning out a crew no whit inferior to that of the preceding year, and it was evident in many ways that the backers of the Blue were confident of another victory.

Dick was himself again; contented, hard-working, even hopeful despite his dark forebodings. He had not forgotten his lapse from honor; he often spent miserable moments in thinking about it; but, what with earnest promises to atone for it and with work and study enough to occupy every moment of his waking time, he found his periods of self-abasement becoming fewer and fewer. He was certain of passing his examinations well, and believed he would graduate an honor man of three terms.

On Thursday he and Trevor and Muggins sat in the grand stand and cheered nine clever young gentlemen on to a decisive victory over the ball players of St. Eustace, a victory that indicated a second to come when Hillton played the last game of the series at Marshall the following week. Gray was elated, and Hillton was proud of him, and gave evidence of its pride by well-nigh raising the roof when he appeared in dining-hall.

And after the game was over Dick and Trevor went to training-table for the last time; and every one was very hopeful and rather sad, and decidedly nervous—every one

save Kirk, who did most of the talking, and told strange and interesting stories of life at Hillton when he was a boy there. There had been no work on the river that day, for the shell had been shipped to Marshall; but a two-mile trot on the road, followed by a five-minute bout with the weights, had taken the place of it. After supper the men went to Society House, where the second crew, disbanded the previous day, joined them, and Professor Beck and two graduates spoke to them in earnest, hopeful strain until it was bedtime. Then the varsity crew got together and cheered long and loud for the second, and the second cheered the varsity, and they both cheered Coach Kirk and Professor Beck and the two graduates. Whereupon all scattered for bed.

The next morning, bright and early, the varsity and substitutes journeyed to Marshall, and at eleven o'clock were paddling slowly over the course of the next day's race, watched here and there by groups of St. Eustacians. They put up at the hotel, where Muggins, attired in a gorgeous crimson blanket adorned on each side with a great white H, attracted much interest, and afforded not a little amusement. He knew every member of the crew and every substitute by nightfall, and gave each a place in his affections. And when, after dinner, the St. Eustace Glee and Mandolin Clubs, followed by a number of boys from across the river, put in an appearance and gave a concert on the veranda, he planted his front feet wide apart, raised his blunt nose

toward the starlit sky, and howled loudly and dismally until Trevor bore him off to bed.

And, although the concert still went on, Trevor did not return to the veranda again. Something, perhaps the excitement of the day, had given him a splitting headache and a queer feeling all over that was difficult to define. So he undressed, climbed into bed, and, cuddling Muggins closely to him, fell off into a dream-troubled slumber.

CHAPTER XXV

"ARE YOU READY? GO!"

HILLTON

NAME.	Position.	Age.	Weight.
R. F. Hope	Stroke	17	134
R. M. Taylor	7	18	150
R. Crocker	6	17	165
C. H. Waters	5	16	142
T. Nesbitt	4	16	149
W. H. Cheever	3	17	148
J. Whitman	2	17	147
R. L. Shield	Bow	17	126
S. M. Keene	Coxswain	17	110
Average for eight		16½	145½

ST. EUSTACE

B. Downs	Stroke	18	147
H. L. Price	7	17	142
A. J. Richardson	6	17	145
T. Wells	5	16	162
P. H. Garrity	4	17	161
A. R. Noland	3	16	143
R. F. Gerstner	2	18	139
W. A. Overton	Bow	17	133
D. E. Perine	Coxswain	18	98
Average for eight		17	146½

Trevor read the tables and laid down the copy of the Marshall Morning Reporter with a sigh and stared across the little lawn at the village street. Muggins worried the

newspaper for a moment, and then, observing Trevor's attitude, cuddled up to him in sympathy, and thumped the porch floor with what, had it been in his power, he would have called his tail. The paper fluttered off across the gravel driveway, and he cocked his ears, meditating pursuit; but Trevor's hand had now found his head; the sun was warm; it was comforting to be rubbed; and so he only blinked sleepily and sat quiet.

Saturday, the 15th of June, had dawned warm and clear. Over the river a little blue mist hung until a strong breeze swept across the water from the west, kicking up quite a rumpus along the eastern shore. The town was already well filled with visitors, among them not a few graduates of Hillton and St. Eustace, who had arrived the preceding evening. The quiet old village was decked in holiday attire, and its shrewd innkeepers and merchants were rubbing their hands in anticipation of the yearly harvest.

Three of the Hillton crew had complained at the breakfast table that morning of having lame backs, while Talbot, a substitute, was clearly out of the question, having no appetite and not a little fever.

"I always said there was malaria in this place," complained Kirk, "it's so low. We had some trouble last year, do you remember, Hope? Benson was attacked with fever, although it left him at noon and he was all right again. That's where St. Eustace has the better of us; she's

used to this place, and we're not. I believe it wouldn't be a half bad plan next year to leave coming here until the morning of the race."

And Trevor, sitting on the edge of the porch, engaged with Muggins's ears, heard and was comforted. He had awoke that morning after an unrefreshing sleep with a most uncomfortable sensation of goneness and a bewildering heaviness in his head. His eyes seemed tired, as though he had been reading long and hard, his lips were parched, and as the morning went on a feeling of feverishness alarmed him. At breakfast he had forced himself to eat, much against the inclination of his stomach, for fear that Kirk would perceive his condition and keep him out of the boat. He was not used to illness, and was inclined to attribute his unpleasant condition to nervousness. And now Kirk's words encouraged him; it was quite likely that he had got into a similar condition to that of the unknown Benson; if so it would be all right when noon came; all he had to do was to look cheerful so that Kirk wouldn't discover his state. So he grinned as broadly as possible, and whistled one of his tuneless tunes. And for a time his indisposition really left him, or very nearly did so, and during the hour of easy work on the river and the subsequent fifteen minutes of starting practice he was able to work well and even brilliantly, and was certain that his illness was past.

The race was down for half-past three. After work in the shell was over and the craft was safe in the little boat-

house some half mile from the hotel, the crew and substitutes, with the exception of the unfortunate Talbot, were taken on a long, unhurried walk along the river under the guidance of Kirk, who tried to keep their thoughts as much as possible off of the coming contest. The nervousness that had begun to make its appearance gradually subsided under the soothing influence of quiet country lanes and wood paths, and at twelve the fellows returned to the hotel looking fresh and untroubled.

The hostelry meanwhile had filled with a merry and excited throng of Hillton boys and graduates, and had become a veritable blaze of crimson. Muggins was beside himself with delight; never before had he received so much attention; he welcomed each new arrival with frantic barks of joy, and scampered about from one group to another, his brilliant blanket flashing restlessly hither and thither. Carl and Stewart and Todd and Williams and everybody else, apparently, had come down for the race, and all was tumult and laughter and handshaking. Old Hillton fellows who had not met for a year or more shouted greetings to each other across the corridor or struggled madly through the throngs to clap each other on the back. Into this scene pushed the returning crew, and as their presence was discovered the crowd broke into ringing cheers, and pressed about them, eager for a word with or a look at the youngsters upon whose broad shoulders rested their hopes.

At last, however, they managed to reach the parlor on

the second floor, into whose sacred precincts admission was denied to all else. Trevor sank into a chair with a smothered groan. The former indisposition had returned with all its former force, and for a moment he sat dazed and faint. When he looked up he found Dick's eyes upon him anxiously.

"What's the matter, chum?"

Trevor smiled with an effort.

"Nothing, I fancy; just a bit—a bit tired."

"Well, sneak off upstairs and lie down a while, like a good chap. We can't have you going off, old fellow. Talbot's the only chap that would be fit for your place, and he's as limp as a rag. Take a rest before dinner."

Trevor obeyed, and spent the next quarter of an hour at full length on his bed in the room which he shared with Dick and two others. He shut his eyes resolutely, telling himself that he would be all right after a nap. But sleep refused to come, and he lay and wondered over and over whether he would be able to take his place in the boat. If he wasn't poor old Dick would be in a hard way, he thought. There were three substitutes there besides Talbot, but not one of them was accustomed to rowing at Number 4, and, for that matter, not one was fitted for the position. All he could do, he resolved, was to fight down the beastly sickness; once in the boat, he felt certain he would be able to do his work. Besides, there was the case of Benson; to be sure, it was already noon, and his fever, instead

of taking itself off, seemed rather to be increasing; but perhaps he had it a little worse than Benson, and it would take longer to disappear. He pressed his hands hard over his forehead in a vain endeavor to ease his headache, and tried his best to go to sleep. And then the dinner gong sounded, and he made a hasty toilet and joined the rest in the parlor, where a private table was spread. The meal was a sorry affair. Even the fellows who had rowed against St. Eustace the year before showed signs of nervousness, while some of the less experienced were in a blue funk. Kirk worked heroically to keep their spirits up, but it was of no avail in most cases, and there was a palpable air of relief when the meal was over and they were free to hide their feelings by moving about and talking to their heart's content. A half-hour later the march to the boat-house was begun, and a crowd of admirers followed in their wake. Once in their places much of the nervousness wore off, and, cheered by the throng on shore, Hillton's crew paddled out into the stream and set leisurely off for the start.

In the open air Trevor's headache lessened, and he felt much better. Dick, who had been plainly anxious about him, found encouragement from his fresher looks and heaved a sigh of relief. As they paddled slowly up the river a sound of distant cheering reached them, and at a command from Keene they rested upon their oars and glanced up-stream and across to the St. Eustace boat-house. The rival eight were stepping into their shell. One after

another the blue-clad youths took their places. Then they put out into the stream and dropped down the river toward the Hillton boat.

"There's a good deal of splashing there," said Dick.

"Yes." Keene watched the oncoming crew attentively. "Yes, port side's terribly ragged. But they look a powerful lot. Touch her easy, Seven. That'll do."

At a little distance up-stream the St. Eustace shell made a wide turn, the eight rowers for a moment resting upon their oars and sending a hearty cheer across the blue water. Hillton returned the compliment and her rival moved away again.

"They look a bit heavier than us," said Shield from the bow of the boat.

"Only about a pound," answered Dick, watching the shell creep up-stream; "that is, according to their weights, you know. But I'll wager that Richardson weighs more than a hundred and forty-five."

"Yes, and Wells is more than seventeen years old," said Taylor.

"I dare say. What time is it, Keene?"

"Five after."

"Well, let's go up. By Jove, fellows, what a day for it!" Dick took a deep breath of the brisk, invigorating air, sweet with the fragrance of lush meadows and moist woods, and turned smilingly to Taylor. "How do you feel?"

"Too good to describe," answered Number 7 heartily. "I could row ten miles instead of two."

"Good boy," said Dick. He gazed up the length of the shell. Answering smiles met him from bright eyes and glowing faces, save in one case. Trevor grinned broadly; he even essayed a wink; but the grin was somewhat awry and the wink was a poor thing. Dick frowned, and, turning, gripped his oar with his exuberance lessened.

"Ready all! Forward! Paddle!"

The shell crept up-stream between banks sprinkled with spectators, hurrying, in most cases, toward the finish line or some midway point of vantage. At the start quite a throng had assembled to see the boats get away. The Terrible, bearing a number of Hillton representatives, chugged alongside, and from her deck Kirk gave his last commands in low tones to Dick and Keene. Then he spoke briefly to the crew, and a moment later both shells backed to the starting-line.

Trevor saw the throng through a light mist. With his hands gripping the oar he stared in growing misery at the neck of Number 5 and waited, wondering for the tenth time how much longer the suspense would last. To the left of him was the St. Eustace boat. The fellows were peeling off their sweaters and some were whispering. Then Trevor was removing his own sweater, and the referee was talking to them about something; what it was he didn't know nor care. If only they would start! He heard

Keene's voice: "Get ready!" He went forward on his slide, turned his blade square in the water, and felt it snug against the thole-pin.

"I shall say 'Are you ready?' once; if I receive no reply I shall say 'Go!'"

The referee's voice came through the megaphone with sudden warning.

"Touch her easy, Two," said the cox in quiet unconcerned tones. "That'll do; steady, Two!"

Trevor's gaze, suddenly roaming to the other boat, saw the rival cox, a red-haired, spidery-looking youth, bending forward, his eyes alert but steady, his hands gripped tight about the lines. The little throng near at hand had grown quiet, almost silent. His head ached a bit, and his eyes——

"*Are you ready?*"

His heart gave a leap that threatened to choke him; then sank quickly, suddenly; he waited—waited. Would the word never come? The breeze was ruffling the back of Waters's shirt. The sun was very bright, and the small waves reflected its rays in the manner of a thousand mirrors. Surely the referee had——

"GO!"

There was a rush of blades through the water, a sudden leap, a confused rattling of many oars, a seething on every side, a shouting from bank and boats. The race was on!

CHAPTER XXVI

AT THE MILE

Splash! Swish! Rattle!

The oars dug into the water venomously, swirled through, emerged dripping and flashing, disappeared again. Brown, sinewy arms shot forward and back, bodies bent and unbent like powerful springs, the water was thrown in little cascades of glistening pearls, and the coxswains, open-mouthed, intense, cried unintelligible things in the uproar, and looked like vindictive little demons crouching for a spring. There was no long, rhythmic swing of the oars now; there was nothing inspiring to the spectators in the quick, dashing movements of the sweeps; all seemed without system, incoherent.

Ten — eleven — twelve — thirteen — fourteen strokes! Then the savage struggle was past, and out from the momentary chaos of uproar and turmoil and seething water the Hillton shell shot into the lead, its bobbing cox even with Number Four of the St. Eustace boat.

"Steady all! Lengthen out! Lengthen out!"

The plunging dips of the eight crimson-bladed oars ceased. Stroke, with a quick glance at the other boat,

moved back to the full limit of the slide, his sweep swirled steadily, almost slowly, through the quieter water, came out square, turned, feathered over yards of racing ripples, and again lost itself under the gleaming surface.

"*Time! Time!*" yelled cox.

And now backs were bending in perfect unison, oarlocks rattled as one, and rowing superbly at thirty-two strokes to the minute, the crimson eight forced the shining cedar craft away until clear water showed between its rudder and the knifelike bow of its rival. Hillton had gained the first trick, and, although the game was by no means yet won, Dick's eyes gleamed with satisfaction, Keene allowed a smile to cross his face, and on the Terrible, racing along in the wake of the speeding shells, Professor Beck and Coach Kirk glanced at each other and nodded. Across the intervening tide came, shrilly, insistent, the cry of the St. Eustace coxswain:

"*Hit her up! Hit her up! Hit her up!*"

In response eight blue-clad bodies bent and strained in an endeavor to place their shell beside Hillton's, and eight blue-tipped oars flashed swiftly back and forth. St. Eustace was rowing thirty-seven. Dick shot a glance of inquiry at Keene. The latter glanced over his right shoulder.

"Can't keep it up," he answered to Stroke's unspoken question. "*Four, you're late!*"

Slowly the bow of the St. Eustace boat crept up on

them; now it was abreast of their rudder; a dozen strokes more and it was even with cox; a minute later St. Eustace's bow oar was cutting the water opposite to Dick. But there was no alteration of the latter's stroke. For a minute or two the Blue's boat hung tenaciously to the place it had won; then, inch by inch, it dropped astern again, yet so slowly that it was long before Dick was certain that it was so. The Blue was rowing at thirty-three now, and very wisely husbanding her strength. The half-mile was past, and the race was a quarter over.

Down at the finish crowds lined the shores and stood packed into a restless mass on the great iron bridge that spans the river a few rods below the imaginary line. The scene was a bright one. Overhead the summer sky arched warmly blue, a vast expanse of color unbroken save in the west, where a soft bank of cumulate clouds lay one upon the other like giant pillows. The river reflected the intense azure of the heavens and caught the sunlight on every ripple and wave until from long gazing upon it the eyes were dazzled into temporary blindness. On each side the banks were thickly wooded save that here and there a square or quadrangle of radiant turf stretched from the margin of the stream upward and away to some quiet mansion leaf-embowered in the distance. The western side of the river was deep-toned with shadows for a little space, and there upon the bank the trees held a promise of the twilight in their dark foliage. Up the stream, to the right,

Marshall dozed in the afternoon, a picturesque group of white buildings, studded here and there with clumps of green; a long, low factory building stood by the water and glowed warmly red in the sunlight. Across the river and almost opposite to the village St. Eustace Academy sprawled its half-dozen edifices down the southern slope of a gentle hill, but only the higher towers and gables showed above the big elms that stood sentinel about it.

Along the bridge and up and down both shores by the finish crimson flags and streamers shone side by side with the deep blue banners of the rival school. Gay hats and bright-hued dresses pricked out the throngs. Field-glasses now and then gave aid to eager eyes, and everywhere was an atmosphere of impatience and excitement. Many nerves were a-tingle there that sunny afternoon, while far up the river, like thin bright streaks upon the water, the two boats, to all appearances side by side, sped onward toward victory or defeat. It was anybody's race as yet, said the watchers on the bridge; and indeed it looked so, not alone to them, but to the spectators in the launches and tugs that followed the shells, to the officials in their speeding craft, to the occupants of the slender cedar racing-ships themselves—to all save one.

Trevor Nesbitt, toiling over his oar with white, set face, was alone certain that defeat was to be the harvest of the eight heroes in crimson. But although he alone was sure, it is possible that Keene was already scenting disaster, for the

coxswain was staring ahead at Trevor with frowning brow and anxious eyes.

"*Brace up, Four! You're late!*"

Trevor heard the cry as one half asleep hears the summons to awake; he wondered why cox didn't speak louder; but he brought his wandering thoughts back the next instant and bore doggedly at his oar. Yes, he could still row; one more stroke; now, yet one more; and still another. It seemed as though each must be his last, and yet, when it was done, strength still remained for another, weaker, slower, but still another. Ever since the half-mile had been passed he had been on the verge of collapse. He was faint and weak and dizzy; the blue sky and glistening water were merged in his failing sight into one strange expanse of awful, monotonous blue that revolved behind him in mighty sweeps like a monster cyclorama. Often it was dotted with craft that trailed soft, gray vapor behind them; often the lights were suddenly turned quite out, and the world was left in impenetrable blackness, and he closed his eyes and was glad.

"*Four! Four! What's the matter? Brace up, man!*"

And then he opened his aching eyes again, slowly, unwillingly, to find the world for the moment normal; to see the muscles of Waters's neck straining like cords; to see a line of crimson bodies working back and forth; to wonder with alarm why he was sitting there motionless when every one else was at work, and then to suddenly discover

that he, too, was going forward and back on the slide, and in time with the other toilers. In one such moment he looked aside and saw a line of blue figures moving like automatons almost even with them. He wondered if they knew—those automatons—that they were going to win. He could tell them, but he wouldn't; not a word. A funny little figure apparently sliding up and down at the stern reminded him of a ridiculous image of a heathen god he had once seen in a museum. It was very funny. He tried to grin——

"*Eyes in the boat, Four!*" shrieked the coxswain shrilly, angrily.

Trevor wondered who he was talking to. Strange that he should talk when they were losing the race; silence—silence like his own—would have been more fitting. There was a sudden jerk at his arms that for the instant brought him back to reality. He didn't know what had happened; possibly he had struck a snag; but he found the time again after a fashion and worked on doggedly, as a machine might work, with neither sensation nor spirit. He had caught a crab, but he didn't know it then. Suddenly an almost overmastering hatred of the tossing blue line across the little breadth of water surged over him. They would win, the beasts, the monsters! And the little heathen image that slid up and down at the end would be happy! And Dick and Keene and all the others would be miserable and heartbroken! Heaven, how he hated

The only way by which he could aid.

those monsters in blue and the little red-haired heathen image!

The cox was talking again now; what was it he said? Water? Cox wanted water; surely some one could get him water? But he had said Five, hadn't he? Well, he wasn't Five, and so—— What was this? He was wet! Oh, yes, Five was splashing him desperately with water. He wondered why and wished he'd stop; it got into his eyes and mouth and bothered him.

"Four, brace up, can't you? It's almost over!" pleaded cox from a great distance.

What was almost over? Trevor opened his eyes and drew his white, dripping forehead into a puzzled frown. Oh, yes, the race! His mind and vision cleared, and he saw things as they were; saw Keene's eyes looking at him despairingly, saw the cox of the St. Eustace boat slide by him and disappear; saw the one mile buoy rush astern; saw himself, huddled over his motionless oar that dragged, splashing, on the surface. His brain was once more clear. He seized the oar handle, and tried to draw it to him. It was no use. He tried to explain it all to Keene in one long, agonized look. Then he saw the only way by which he could aid, and summoning a semblance of strength, with a deep breath, he reached out, and with trembling, nerveless fingers unlocked his oar and dropped it aside. It was lost to sight on the instant.

"*Careful, Four!*" warned the cox.

Trevor steadied himself with a hand on the gunwale, brought his reluctant body half erect, and then flung himself over the side. He heard the coxswain's voice for an instant:

"*Mind oars, Five and Seven!*"

Then the waters closed over his head.

CHAPTER XXVII

AT THE FINISH

"Bow side, raise your hands!" yelled the cox. "Get her level! Six, throw more weight out-board. That's better! Now hard, all! We can do it yet!"

Dick, with dismay at heart, had seen the rival boat creep up and pass them, and had listened despairingly to cox's words:

"Four's given out!"

Then came the command to Five to throw water over Trevor. Dick, not daring to turn his head for an instant, rowed on desperately, watching Keene's face for any glimmer of hope that might show thereon.

"No use," said cox presently in low tones. "He's a goner! His oar's trailing. Hello! Easy now!"

Dick saw the light of hope creep into the other's eyes.

"Mind oars, Five and Seven! Four's gone over the side!"

And then Dick caught sight of a brown arm gleaming just under the surface, and as he once more took up the stroke, far astern a dripping head emerged, was visible for a moment, and again disappeared under the dancing

wavelets. Dick closed his eyes, an awful horror gripping him. Trevor had gone down!

"Careful, Stroke! Take your time!" cautioned Keene.

Dick opened his eyes again and looked up the stream, and hope came to him. One of the launches—it looked like the Terrible—had crossed into the wakes of the shells. If Trevor only came up again! Dick cried within him. And even while his thoughts took the form of a wild, incoherent prayer he saw the launch circle to port and stop. And when she once more swung about the sunlight glowed on a dripping crimson shirt.

"Safe!" cried Dick aloud. Keene nodded and glanced anxiously ahead. Dick with thankful heart tugged stoutly at his oar.

"Where are they?" he gasped.

"Three lengths ahead," answered Keene. "We're holding them now." He raised his voice. "Six, you've got to do two men's work now! Long and steady does it! Bow, you're late! Steady all!"

The mile buoy was far astern. St. Eustace, rowing well at thirty-six, was, as Keene had said, three lengths in the lead. Trevor's dead weight and dragging oar had given her her chance. Her crew had seen the trouble in the Hillton shell, and, whatever their emotions were, they were now confident of success, for a three-length lead and eight oars to seven spelled victory for the Blue. The St. Eustace

coxswain glanced back over his shoulder and gave a command to the men. The distance had not increased since the Crimson's Number 4 had gone overboard; that wouldn't do. The blue-clad eight hit up their stroke. But Keene had been watching and waiting. He would rather have had the struggle come later, in the last half mile; but there was no help for it.

"Now, fellows, ten hard ones and together! Swing out and use your legs! One! . . . Two! . . . Three! . . ."

For the first time in the race the seven boys put every bit of weight and muscle into their strokes. They all knew what the words meant; St. Eustace, somewhere ahead there, was spurting and trying to draw away; if she succeeded it was all up with them. Backs bent and sprang, slides sped from stop to stop, arms and legs straightened and doubled until muscles knotted like ropes beneath tanned skin, blades cleaved the surface like ruddy knives and emerged yards distant to skim and flash over the swirling, racing water for the next grip, breaths came in deep gasps, and the shell flew forward, seeming rather to skim the surface as a darting swallow skims the bosom of a pond, than to cleave the glinting water.

"*Seven! . . . Eight! . . . Nine! . . . Ten!*" counted the coxswain. "Don't slacken! Keep her going! We're gaining on them hand over fist! Hard, all, hard, and use your legs for all that's in 'em!"

And gaining they were. With seven oars instead of

eight, with a boat that listed plainly to bow-side, they were gaining! St. Eustace's coxswain looked back again; again shrieked to his crew. But this time the response was not evident. They were doing their best. As the beginning of the last half-mile was reached the voice of the bobbing figure in the stern of the St. Eustace shell came to Dick's ears, and his heart leaped at the sound:

"*Hit her up! Hit her up! Hit her up!*"

Dick, his face streaming with perspiration, his hands burning on the oar-handle, peeked out of the corners of his eyes to the left for a glimpse of the screaming cox. But not yet. His boat was gaining, swiftly, steadily, but three lengths is a long distance to cut down with your rivals rowing at forty strokes to the minute.

"Lengthen out, Stroke!" called Keene.

The seven rowers steadied down and swung longer. The mile and one half point was already far astern, and Keene could see the faces of the crowds at the finish distinctly. For the first time since the start he met Dick's eyes and smiled. Then, and as it seemed to Dick, from almost at his side, came a shrill cry:

"Eyes in the boat, Seven! Finish out, Six, finish out!"

It was the St. Eustace coxswain, and at the same moment a speck trembled just within the field of Dick's vision at the left. The next instant it took shape; he could see the rival boat's rudder, a portion of the stern, with the

steering lines white and gleaming in the sunlight. They were almost even! He was conscious of a new sound, quite distinct from the working of the slides, the rattle of the locks and the rush of oars—a confused murmur that gradually took shape and resolved itself into the cheering of human voices. Surely the finish-line was at hand! He glanced at Keene. That youth, white beneath the tan of his face, with perspiration standing upon his forehead in little glistening beads, was looking straight ahead, with every thought straining toward the goal.

"Now, once more, all!" screamed the St. Eustace coxswain. "Pick her up! You're not half rowing! Five, steady down! Four, you're late, you're late! Row! Row!"

And then the little red-haired youth also crept into Dick's sight; a pale-faced, despairing figure, crouching there in the stern, bobbing forward and back as though to hurl his boat across the line by his own unaided efforts. One glance at his face brought a flood of joy to Dick! St. Eustace was already beaten—and that white-faced cox knew it! In the next minute a qualm of pity for the struggling opponents came to him, only to be swallowed up in a great wave of triumph as he found himself opposite to the St. Eustace stroke. The three lengths were gone and the two boats were even at last!

The shouting from the shore was louder, and Dick could distinguish the cheers of his schoolmates from the slogan

of St. Eustace's supporters. But how he wished for the end! His breath seemed gone, and every respiration shook his body from head to feet. The perspiration on his face had turned to little drops of ice-water. The river danced and wavered in his sight. His arms were like bars of lead, and his legs from hips to toes seemed no longer connected with the upper portion of him, but were dead, benumbed; he could have put his hand on the very place where they had been cut off. Surely they were at the line now! Surely it was time to get into the lead! He glanced appealingly at Keene.

The latter drew the port rudder-line to him slowly for an inch. Then he turned toward the speeding boat beside him and looked it over, up and down; Two was splashing badly; Four was rolling on his seat like a drunken man; Stroke was plainly worked out; his eyes met those of the red-haired cox; the latter glared across at him vindictively. He turned again and ran his eyes over his own boat: Bow was weakening, but still steady; Six was struggling blindly with half-closed eyes; the balance of the seven were still strong for that period of a two-mile race. He looked ahead at the boats and the bridge above, dark with humanity.

"Two hundred yards!" shrieked the St. Eustace coxswain. "Now pick her up! We've got the race if you'll only take it! Stroke, for Heaven's sake, man, pick her up! Row! . . . Row! . . . Row!"

Two hundred yards! Dick looked at Keene; the latter nodded. Dick rattled his hands away quickly.

"Hit her up all!" cried Keene. "Here's the finish! Row now, row for Hillton! We've got to win!"

"Now then, fellows!" gasped Dick. His blade went under for a hard, desperate stroke, and the next moment seven bodies were straining at the oars in a last, heroic endeavor.

"Well done, all! Keep it up! Keep it up! Once more! Well rowed, fellows! Well rowed! We're gaining! Use your legs! Well rowed!"

Keene's voice arose loud and full of encouragement. From across the little path of intervening water came the shrill reiterant appeals of the other coxswain:

"Hard! Hard! We've got them! Keep going! Another stroke or two! Hard! Row hard!"

The aid was full of the cheers of the excited watchers and the blatant screams of the whistles of surrounding craft. To Dick it was all a confused babel of awful sound. He had closed his eyes, fearing to see the rival boat slipping from sight. But now, gathering courage, he looked. They were in a lane of assembled craft, from which arose streams and clouds of steam; beyond the noisy gathering the river bank was lined with moving throngs; beside him—— His heart sank; the St. Eustace boat was gone! The little bobbing coxswain, the toiling stroke oar, were no longer beside him! He looked despairingly at Keene; something in the latter's

expression sent his glance beyond, and joy rushed back to his heart. The rival boat was a length behind! He closed his eyes again from sheer happiness, and tugged on at the oar. The uproar was deafening, but suddenly, above it all, he heard the coxswain's voice:

"*Let her run!*"

When he looked up again, raising his head from his hot, trembling hands, he found to his surprise that his eyes were wet. They were in shadow now, and he glanced up to find the arches of the bridge above them. The noise was less. He blinked through wet lashes at Keene. The latter was grinning happily, foolishly.

"Length and a quarter, about," he said.

From the bridge overhead and from the throng beyond came cheers for Hillton.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TREVOR IS COMFORTED

It was an hour short of sunset when Trevor awoke. The room was darkened, but now and then the curtain at the open window was stirred by the languorous breeze and admitted a broad bar of sunlight which lengthened across the floor and was gone again as the curtain fell back into place. The hotel was almost silent, though at intervals the hum of voices came subduedly to the boy in the bed, and at times he caught the clatter of dishes.

For many minutes he lay quiet. Everything was very peaceful and soothing, and he closed his eyes once more, but only to reopen them as his mind took up his work again. Where was he and how came he there? It wasn't his room at Hillton; this wasn't his narrow iron bed; the wall-paper was all wrong; the carpet was different, and the window was entirely out of place. And then, too, it was much too big, this high-ceilinged, square apartment. He raised himself on his elbow and examined his surroundings. He was quite alone, but on a small table beside him were two tumblers half full of something, a pitcher, two silver spoons, and a watch.

He reached forth and drew the latter toward him. It was his own, and its hands indicated twenty after six. His gaze roamed about the room and fell upon a pair of canvas rowing shoes. Then memory returned, and he sank back upon the pillow with a groan, closing his eyes and moving his head restlessly from side to side as his thoughts went back over the day's events. He remembered the awful period in the boat; it seemed now as he looked back upon it as though it must have been hours and hours, though he knew that from the time of starting until he had plunged into the river but five or six minutes could have elapsed; he remembered a world of green, silent water about him, a brief glare of blue sky and flashing sunlight, many faces bending above him, and then, but very indistinctly, a man with gray mustaches who raised him up and made him swallow something.

He was rather tired and listless now, but his headache was gone and his fever had passed away, and—yes, he felt pretty well. Perhaps he had best get up and dress himself; it would soon be time to return to Hillton. If only some one would come and tell him. But of course no one cared much about him now; how could they? It was natural that he should be left alone, he who had lost the race for Hillton. He sighed and clenched his hands above the white spread. What must they think of him? His cheeks reddened at the thought of facing Dick and Kirk and all the others. Of course, Dick would make light of it, and he was

sure that Kirk would carefully abstain from saying anything to hurt his feelings; and perhaps the other fellows would be very decent about it. But in their hearts they must hate him; it was only natural. He was glad that the school year was almost over; perhaps next year it would be partly forgotten; perhaps he needn't return to Hillton at all!

Suddenly, from a little distance, came a sound of noisy laughter. He frowned. How could any one laugh, he wondered indignantly. The thought came to him that maybe some one down there had spoken his name, and he felt his face burning hotly with shame. He turned over and laid his head on his arm and closed his eyes wearily. He wished Muggins was there. It was very still again. A long tremor shook him and he felt a tiny scorching tear roll down his cheek. He brushed it away quickly, but another took its place, and still another, and presently, while the sunlight moved from the western window, he fell asleep again.

When next he woke the room was in twilight darkness, although the curtain had been rolled away from the open window. There were two figures by the little table, and he heard low voices:

"Is he awake?"

"I guess not. It's time for his medicine, isn't it?"

"Yes, shall I wake him?"

"I don't know. Let's wait a minute or two."

The figures moved across the room and darkened the

square of the casement. Trevor laid very still; perhaps they would go away again if he feigned sleep. He could hear them conversing softly, but couldn't distinguish their words because—because there was such a noise outside! What was it? He could hear shouting and sometimes the blare of a band. It must be at the front of the hotel. St. Eustace was celebrating her victory probably, and Hillton's defeat! He groaned and tossed an arm despairingly. One of the figures turned and walked toward him.

"Awake, Trevor?"

It was Dick's voice. For a moment Trevor was silent; then he answered with a sigh:

"Yes."

The second figure came and leaned over him and he saw that it was Kirk.

"How are you feeling now, chum?" asked Dick, with all the old affection in his voice. Trevor felt his eyes growing moist, and he had to gulp twice before he could answer.

"All right, Dick; I think I can get up now."

"Get up! Indeed, you'll not. You're to stay here to-night, and I'm going to stay with you. The others are getting ready to go back now; can you hear them?"

"Let's see what the boy looks like," said Kirk. "I'll light the gas and give him his medicine."

"Don't, please don't!" cried Trevor. It was all so much easier in the darkness.

"All right," Kirk answered cheerfully. "I dare say it would hurt your eyes. But here's the stuff. Open your mouth."

Trevor obeyed, and after several misadventures the medicine was administered. Dick had seated himself on the side of the bed and had taken one of the other lad's hands in his own.

"Trevor."

"Yes?"

"A length and a third, old chap!"

Trevor sighed, and then, "I—I suppose it might have been worse, Dick?"

"Worse?" cried Dick. "What are you talking about? Why, we're awfully proud of it, every one of us! Aren't we, Mr. Kirk?"

"Yes, and we have good cause, I think. It was magnificent!"

"And, Trevor," went on Dick in tones so full of happiness that Trevor wondered, "all the fellows want you to hurry up and get well; and we all cheered you at dinner till the plaster nearly fell on us!"

"Cheered me!" whispered Trevor. "Cheered me, Dick? Do you mean—do you mean that they—that you all forgive me?"

"Forgive you? What for? Because you were the pluckiest of any of us and did the brainiest sort of thing when you jumped overboard?"

"Because—oh, Dick, don't you see? If I hadn't been so bull-headed it wouldn't have happened; if I'd owned up that I wasn't feeling well you could have put another fellow in. But I heard Mr. Kirk telling about some fellow who had the fever and how it left him at noon; and I thought mine would, too; and so I went ahead, and—and it didn't go away, but got worse every minute; I was all silly in my head. And—don't you see, Dick, if I'd done right we wouldn't have been beaten?"

There was a moment's silence. Then—

"He doesn't know!" said Kirk softly.

"By Jove!" whispered Dick. "Of course he doesn't; how could he? Thunder, how stupid of me!" He laughed softly, happily. "Trevor, old chap, we weren't beaten! Don't you understand? We won!"

There was a second brief silence. Then—

"Won!" breathed Trevor, incredulously.

"Yes, by a length and a third. I told you, don't you remember? But you didn't understand."

"You—you're just saying it to—to make me feel better," doubted Trevor.

"No, honestly, chum; we won. Mr. Kirk will tell you."

"Yes, Nesbitt, we won finely; there's no doubt about that. Listen."

From below, through the open window, came the martial strains of a band; Trevor recognized the tune; it was

"Hilltonians." And then, faintly but distinctly, came a hoarse voice:

"Now, fellows! Once more! Three times three for Hillton!"

The music was blotted out by a mighty cheer that arose to the starlit sky in a roar of triumph. Trevor was glad of the darkness, for there were tears in his eyes that threatened every moment to overflow; but they were tears of happiness, and somehow those didn't count.

"And—and they don't mind that I—that I did what I did?" whispered Trevor. "They don't hate me for it, Dick?"

"Hate you!" cried Dick. "Hark!"

Through the casement, a gray rectangle of twilight, the strained voice of the leader again floated:

"Now, fellows! Fellows! Once more for Nesbitt, and all together! One—two——"

And while the hoarse, joyful cheers responded, and the bass-drum thumped triumphantly, Trevor, with his hand tightly clasped in Dick's, laid his head back very contentedly upon the pillow.

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